



Field Marshal Tantawy, portrait of the week by Bahgory....p. 8

Quake rocks region

AN EARTHQUAKE with a magnitude of at least 5.7 on the Richter scale shook Egypt and other countries in the Middle East yesterday, swaying buildings and sending hundreds of frightened people into the streets.

A 40-year-old woman was killed under the debris of her collapsed three-storey house near the town of El-Santa in the Nile Delta province of Gharbiya. In Cairo, several old buildings cracked in the districts of Sharabiya, Ezbekya, Abdin, Old Cairo and Boulaq but there were no reports of casualties.

Five residents of the western port of Paphos in Cyprus were slightly injured and a number of buildings suffered mild damage, state-run Cyprus radio said.

The tremor struck at 3.11 pm and was centred off the southwestern coast of Cyprus. It was also felt in Israel, the Occupied Territories, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Greece.

Rebecca Phipps, a spokeswoman for the US Geological Survey in Reston, Virginia, said the earthquake measured 6.4 on the Richter scale. The British Geological Survey said it registered 6.5 but Egypt's Helwan Observatory put the magnitude at 5.7.

The Middle East News agency said President Hosni Mubarak telephoned Dr Venetie Kamel Gouda, minister of state for scientific research, to inquire about the magnitude and epicentre of the quake. Mubarak kept in touch with "all concerned bodies" and was kept informed about details of the situation.

Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri and Information Minister Saifat El-Sherif also telephoned Gouda to make similar inquiries.

Gouda said the quake was epicentred south of Cyprus and preliminary readings by Egyptian seismological stations put its magnitude at between 5.7 and 6 points on the Richter scale.

People ran into the streets of Cairo, fearing that some of the city's old buildings might collapse. Telephone lines were disrupted briefly in parts of the capital.

An earthquake measuring 6.2 hit the Gulf of Aqaba last November, damaging several buildings and properties in Jordan, Egypt and Israel. At least eight people were killed. A quake that struck Cairo on 12 October 1992 killed more than 450 people, injured 4,000 and caused extensive damage to buildings.

A quake of magnitude 6 can cause severe damage if it is centred under a populated area. Magnitude 7 indicates a major earthquake capable of widespread, heavy damage.

Weizman visit

ISRAELI President Ezer Weizman will make a one-day official visit to Egypt on Monday for talks with President Hosni Mubarak on the troubled peace process and tension between Israel and Egypt.

Weizman's office announced yesterday that the visit comes in response to an invitation by Mubarak. Weizman, whose post is largely ceremonial, hosted Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Tuesday at his home in Caesarea, northern Israel.

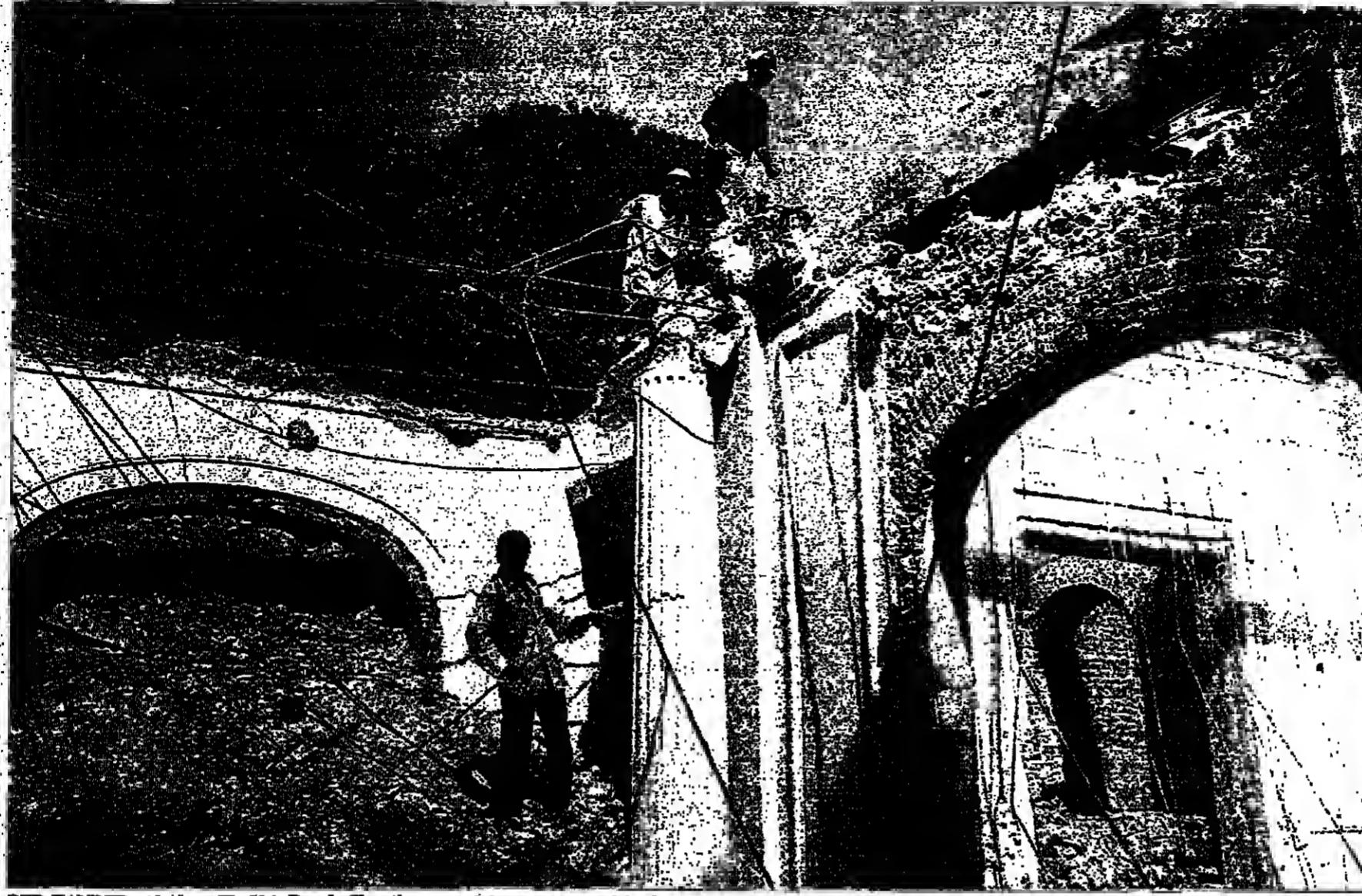
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RED-HANDED: *Al-Ahram Weekly's* Randa Sheath captured the destruction of the Garden City villa weeks ago. Next week a two-page profile of the district will feature more photos

The villain and the villa

SCATTERED throughout nearly all of Cairo's districts are architectural milestones testifying to the city's millennium-long history. While some are, obviously, in better shape than others, these buildings have, on the whole, withstood the test of time and nature. But, as the opulent El-Morgani Pasha's villa discovered the hard way, they are no match for a keen business eye and a bulldozer. This turn-of-the-century villa, located on Dar El-Shifa St. in the tree-lined Cairo district of Garden City, is but the latest victim to the urbanisation and demolition craze.

Egged on by soaring land prices, the new owner of the villa apparently saw that LE15 million (approximate value of the land) was incentive enough to skip the necessary demolition permit and to violate a ministerial decree issued by Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri banning the demolition of historically and architecturally significant villas and palaces. The owner, however, was thoughtful enough to demolish the building very carefully so as not to damage the rococo-style villa's marble walls and stairs, which, demolition workers said, were later sold for LE200,000.

Although demolition work on the villa began two months ago, it was only brought to the prime minister's attention during the last few days, said sources at the Cabinet. El-Ganzouri immediately sent President Hosni Mubarak a report revealing the transgression. Mubarak, on Tuesday, issued a decree, dismissing the deputy governor for Western Cairo and suspending, for dereliction of duty, the head of the West Cairo district.

And while the president's move should, in the future, serve to deter similar cases of "negligence" on the part of officials and contractors, for the villa, which is now reduced to rubble, it serves as an angry reminder that without vigilance, history could find that it has no place in the present.

Talks snag on re-negotiations

Hebron's settlers veto the peace, as Israel persists in trying to re-negotiate the Oslo Accords, while maintaining that it isn't

Amid reports that Palestinian-Israeli talks had snagged over Israel's redeployment from Hebron, the special US envoy to the negotiations said both sides were making a "serious effort" to reach an agreement.

In a statement issued yesterday, US Middle East Co-ordinator Dennis Ross said Israeli and Palestinian negotiators met for over three hours of talks on Hebron Tuesday evening. The talks are being held at the Erez checkpoint, the crossing between the autonomous Gaza Strip and Israel.

"They are making a serious effort to understand each other's concerns," Ross said, adding that additional talks were scheduled for yesterday.

Ross shuttled between top Israeli and Palestinian officials in an apparent attempt to break the deadlock. He met in Jerusalem with Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and then drove to Gaza City for a meeting with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

"I think what's most important is to see if we can translate the sense of understanding of concerns on each side into a set of understandings about how to move forward," Ross said after the meeting with Mordechai. "We're obviously not there yet."

Arafat warned that unless Israel showed more flexibility

the talks were heading for failure. "I am not sure that we will be able to accomplish anything in the talks unless the Israeli government changes its position and honours the agreements it has already signed. No one expects that," Arafat said in an interview.

Israel radio quoted an unnamed senior Palestinian official as saying the differences between the two sides were so serious that another meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and Arafat might be necessary to bridge the gap.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army announced that 10,000 Palestinian workers are now allowed to return to their jobs in Israel but journalists at the Erez crossing said few workers crossed yesterday — apparently because they did not yet have permits.

In the talks with the Palestinians, Israel is asking for adjustments in security arrangements to protect 450 Jewish settlers living in the West Bank city of Hebron, home to some 94,000 Palestinians.

Israeli negotiators sought to reduce the size of the Palestinian police force due to take control of parts of Hebron and insisted they be armed with pistols rather than automatic rifles.

"We told them we don't want to change any article of the agreement that we signed on Hebron. We reject the principle of what they raised," said Hassan Asfour, a senior Palestinian negotiator.

The agreement signed with Israel's previous Labour government called for Israel to pull the bulk of its troops out of Hebron while providing security for the settlers that Netanyahu contends is not adequate.

Israeli news reports quoted Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat as saying that if appropriate security cannot be provided for the Jewish community, Israel would have to evacuate them from Hebron.

"The real problem in the negotiations is that Israel is trying to redraw the agreement to fit the settlers. Why doesn't it try to make an agreement to fit the 8 million Palestinians and Israelis?" Erekat told Reuters.

"There are also Palestinian security concerns. These settlers are responsible for all the problems and the massacres," he told the 88-member Palestinian Legislative Council in a reference to a Jewish settler's massacre of 29 Palestinian worshippers at Hebron's Al-Ibrahimi Mosque in 1994.

"I wonder if any Israeli would like to have these settlers

as his neighbour," Erekat said.

Declaring the talks faced a "true crisis," Erekat called on the United States to actively intervene to avert a total breakdown. "The American side is called upon to oblige the Israelis to implement agreements" providing for the Hebron deployment he said.

Israel was to have withdrawn from Hebron last March but the pullout was delayed by a series of suicide bombings in February and March and was further postponed after Netanyahu defeated Shimon Peres in Israel's elections in May.

Arafat paid his first public visit to Israel on Tuesday, pledging to keep Palestinian police from firing again on Israeli soldiers.

Sitting in garden chairs on the terrace of Israeli President Ezer Weizman's villa in Caesarea, Arafat and Weizman traded compliments, shook hands for the cameras and agreed there was no alternative to peace.

The cordial luncheon and Arafat's promises contrasted sharply with the deep discord evident in the talks at Erez.

Arafat proposed moving the negotiations to Eilat, Israel's southern Red Sea port, or to Taba, an Egyptian resort just across the border, in order to hold "continuous talks" away from the media spotlight.

Analysis

Likud coalition in distress

The key to understanding Netanyahu lies less in the enigma of his policies than in the fragility of the Israeli leader's ruling coalition, writes Graham Usher from Jerusalem

After a week of the worst violence ever seen in the Occupied Territories, Palestinian-Israeli negotiations resumed on 6 October in a last-ditch effort to salvage the Oslo peace process. At the first meeting, it was agreed to form three committees — on Israel's stalled redeployment in Hebron, on economic relations and on military-civil matters. But all are aware that the critical issue is

On his whistle-stop trip to the negotiations, US Secretary of State Warren Christopher pledged that the two sides would negotiate "within the four corners" of the existing agreement on Hebron. Israel's Foreign Minister David Levy, says he is convinced that the security "adjustments" Israel is seeking in Hebron "can be carried out within the framework of the existing agreement, that it is not a matter of renegotiating or opening the agreement." After 100-plus days of stalling on Hebron by the Likud government, such reassurances can't lull ice with the PLO leader. "We will wait and see," said Arafat coolly, on the eve of the negotiations.

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are also waiting. Apart from an incident on 2 October in which the Israeli army shot dead one Palestinian and wounded four outside a village near Hebron, the territories were tense but quiet last week. One reason was that, by 8 October the army had lifted most of the internal closure it imposed on Gaza and the West Bank, although tanks and helicopter gunships are still in place around the cities of Nablus and Hebron.

It was these conflicting signals that made his decision to open the tunnel in Jerusalem so incendiary rather than the decision per se. As the territories become engulfed in virtual war, the hope was that Netanyahu would realise that he could either wreck Oslo or uphold it, but that he could no longer do both. The realisation has yet to dawn.

At the crisis summit in Washington, the Clinton administration suggested six

different "gestures" Netanyahu could make to restore faith in the peace process. The Israeli leader rejected them all, including closing the tunnel in Jerusalem or setting a date for the redeployment in Hebron, on the grounds that peace must be achieved "through negotiations and not through violence." Yet, on his return from Washington, Netanyahu took the unprecedented step of appearing on Israel's Arabic television channel to appeal directly to the Palestinians. "I ask you not to lose hope," he pleaded. "We were almost in the abyss..." but now "there is an opportunity for a fresh start for the peace process."

How to interpret such messages? Some Israeli analysts believe they are mere reflexes as Netanyahu and his government lurch from one crisis to another. Others — especially on the Palestinian side — say they are part of a conspiracy to increase the heat in the territories, thereby readying the Israeli army to reoccupy and thus bury Oslo once and for all.

But perhaps a more sober explanation lies less in the enigma of Netanyahu's policies than in the fragility of his ruling coalition. Should Netanyahu proceed with Oslo's interim agreement as written — as the Palestinians and the Arabs are demanding — he risks the defection of members from Likud as well as the hardline national religious party, which has nine Knesset seats. Should he not proceed, the moderate wing of his coalition, such as Avigdor Kahalani's Third Way bloc and the religious Shas movement (who, together, have 13 seats), have already signalled they are ready to throw in their lot with the Labour opposition. Either way the coalition falls, opening the way to new Israeli elections or a national unity government.

There are many in Israel and the Occupied Territories who believe the latter option is perhaps now the only way to save the Oslo process. The wheels ahead will show whether Netanyahu is one of them.

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Channelling delegated powers

Awad El-Mort,
Chief Justice of the
Supreme Constitutional
Court, examines con-
stitutional provisions
limiting the exercise of delegated powers

Under Article 108 of the Constitution the president is entitled — in case of necessity and exceptional circumstances and upon delegation by a two-thirds majority of the members of the People's Assembly — to take decisions having the force of law. Delegated powers must be for a specified period, bearing on a defined subject matter, and articulating the basis on which its regulation shall lean. These decisions have to be submitted to the Assembly on its first meeting following the expiry of the time limit prescribed for the use of delegated powers. Should they not be submitted, or fail to procure the approval of the Assembly after their submission thereto, they cease to have the force of law.

In case No. 25 for the eighth judicial year decided on 16 May 1992, the constitutional issue addressed to the Court for adjudication concerned the invalidity or otherwise of Decree-Law No. 102 (1980). The petitioners in this case, who after the termination of their service in the armed forces joined the Arab Authority for Manufacturing, claimed that, in addition to their earned salaries therefrom they remained entitled to their military pensions, acquired under Law No. 90 (1975). However, in 1980, Article 18 of Law No. 150 (1967) concerning the immunities and privileges of this authority was abrogated by Article 1 of the challenged presidential decree-law, which also subjected two employees of the authority and its productive units to Law No. 79 (1975) regarding social security, with the effect that military pensions which they used to receive in addition to their salaries were withheld.

The petitioners argued that Decree-Law No. 105 (1980) overstepped the limits of delegation accorded to the president under Law No. 29 (1972), on the grounds that whereas this law confined powers delegated to the president to the ratification of armament conventions and the issuance of decisions having the force of law in matters relating to arms expenditures and others necessary for the armed forces, the challenged decree law was formulated to regulate requirements of social security for employees in the aforesaid authority in violation of articles 86 and 108 of the Constitution.

In striking down the contested decree-law, the Court pointed out that constitutional provisions represent the norms substantiating the regime of governance, levelling the apex of all mandatory rules. Delegated powers do not fall within the original mandate of the executive, but are derogative from its normal activities, in that only within their narrow restrained constitutional limits may such powers be exercised and construed.

In fact the framers exhaustively enumerated the exceptional jurisdictions of the executive along with their external boundaries in order to firmly rationalise their exercise and ordain their confinement to constitutional limitations.

Initially, legislation is the business of parliament under Article 86 of the Constitution. However, the principle of the separation of powers, which excludes overlapping jurisdictions and forbids intervention by a governmental branch into competencies allocated to another, was balanced by the need to confront threatening situations exacting the issuance of presidential decrees prescribing measures capable of meeting, promptly and accurately, the exigencies and repercussions of such situations.

With this in view, delegated powers were designed by the framers not as a parliamentary sweeping concession granting the president an absolute overall power, but as a narrowly limited faculty attached to necessities and associated with its compelling emanations. To this end, the Constitution ordained the parliament not to entirely renounce or substantially delegate the most important aspects of its legislative power. Motivated by the need to restrain the power to delegate, the Constitution set forth its requirements to which this Court extends its exclusive power of judicial review.

Under Article 108 of the Constitution, powers delegated to the executive, are firmly constrained: firstly, by the existence of circumstances of exceptional nature and where necessary in order not to use this power without reining adapting it to the need to face compelling situations; secondly, by requiring the approval of at least a two-thirds majority of the members of the parliament to ensure the existence of such pressing situations and other conditions to which delegation is attached; thirdly, by mandating a parliamentary determination as to the subject-matter of delegation and the basis on which its regulation shall take place (the idea behind this, is to suppress tendencies of excessiveness if the executive was left uncontrolled to legislate); and fourth, by demanding an ascertained time limit defined either explicitly or implicitly and beyond which delegated powers will be withheld, in order not to admit their use in a manner invasive of the original competence of the parliament in adopting, amending or abrogating statutes in all domains.

Indeed, a fair exercise of delegated powers could not be achieved in the absence of viable controls thereon. This power of review — under the Constitution — has been conferred on parliament to verify the extent to which constitutional limitations on delegation had been observed.

In this regard, the framers' concern was to oblige the president to submit to the parliament — and on its first session following the termination of the duration of delegated powers — the measures which he had taken in compliance therewith.

Failure to submit these measures thereto, or to have the approval of the parliament thereof, necessitates their detachment from the force of law which previously accompanied their issuance.

Within these lines, the exercise of delegated powers beyond their subject matter, violating the original competence of the parliament, dictates their annulment by this Court.

Indeed, the challenged Decree-Law No. 102 (1980) provided that Law No. 79 (1975) on social security shall apply to Egyptians employed either in the Arab Authority for Manufacturing, its productive units or corporations in which it participates. This authority was established among certain Arab countries — considered parties to its constituent instrument — with the intention to build up an industrial Arab base ensuring the progressive development of advanced industries and the common interests of these countries. Later on, participants in this authority, with the exception of Egypt, declared their withdrawal therefrom. As a consequence the challenged Decree-Law No. 30 (1979) was issued requiring on the one hand the retaining of its prior privileges, immunities and powers, along with the continuity of its activities and the bearing of its former liabilities, and on the other hand depriving the petitioners from their military pensions so long as they remain in the service of the authority.

The government claimed that the challenged decree-law was issued under delegated powers mandated to the president by Law No. 29 (1972).

However, the Court noticed that this law dealt solely with the ratification of armament conventions along with military expenditures, requiring — as outlined by the explanatory note of that law — secrecy and promptness.

Taking into account that the subject-matter of the challenged decree-law was the annulment of the petitioners' right to collaterally have their salaries earned from the Arab Manufacturing Authority and the pensions they acquired in return of their past services in the armed forces, the challenged decree law's pertinence of which to the delegating law is entirely lacking, deviates from constitutional requirements, violating Article 108.

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VICTORY FESTIVITIES: Paratroopers, some of them carrying President Hosni Mubarak's picture, landed on the stage as part of a gala celebration on Monday night marking the 23rd anniversary of the October 1973 War. President Mubarak, Mrs Suzanne Mubarak, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi, minister of defence, watched the song-and-dance festival organised by the ministries of defence and culture on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal opposite Ismailia

Private property defended

Under a controversial ruling by the Supreme Constitutional Court, the prosecutor-general should be stripped of his power to impound the assets of suspected financial offenders. **Mona El-Nahhas** reports

The Supreme Constitutional Court ruled on Saturday that an article in the Criminal Procedures Law that empowers the prosecutor-general to impound the assets of suspects accused of public money offences was unconstitutional. The court, under Chief Justice Awad El-Mort, declared that Article 208 ran counter to a constitutional text that prohibits the sequestration of private property without a court order.

The article in question states that the prosecutor has the authority to impound the assets of the accused if investigation produced enough evidence proving that the offender is guilty of embezzling state funds.

Constitutional Court sources told *Al-Ahram Weekly* the ruling was aimed at protecting private property and removing all "unconstitutional" barriers that might prevent its administration by the accused. Citing the legal principle that the accused is innocent until proven guilty, a source said: "It's illogical to deal with innocent people as if they were criminals, impounding their property before they are proven to be guilty."

Prosecutor Raga El-Arabi declined to comment on the court ruling, declaring that it was still under study. But the ruling aroused controversy in legal circles, with some expressing worry about the consequences of its application and others disagreeing on whether it has a retroactive effect.

Court sources said the ruling was intended to be retroactive. "It should lead to the annulment of all orders issued by the prosecutor-general as long as the case continues to be heard by the courts," a source said.

Nabil Medhat Salem, head of Ain Shams University's Criminal Law Department, shared the same opinion. He argued that since the ruling is retroactive it should apply to El-Rayyan and El-

Sherif, two defunct financial investment companies, whose assets were seized, and are being run, by the prosecutor-general. The sequestration of the two companies should be annulled, Salem said.

For her part, Fawzia Abdel-Sattar, a law professor at Cairo University, insisted that the ruling has no retroactive effect. According to Abdel-Sattar, the law establishing the Constitutional Court made it clear that its rulings take effect on the day following their publication in the official gazette. "This means that all orders the prosecutor may issue in the future are null and void but the orders he issued in the past, such as those related to the financial investment companies, cannot be touched," she said.

Abdel-Sattar also expressed fear that the ruling might have negative consequences. "Court orders usually take a very long time. The delay would provide the accused with the opportunity to smuggle their money abroad. By the time the court establishes that the suspect is guilty, the money would be gone," she said.

Abdel-Sattar explained that the sole aim of the abolished article was to protect public money. The prosecutor's order was only provisional. If the suspect is found to be innocent, he will retake possession of his money. If he is proven to be guilty, the money will be restored to its original owners," she said.

Responding to this, a Constitutional Court source, who asked that his name be withheld, said a court order impounding the assets of a suspect should not take more than two weeks. "Any delay should not be used as pretext for violating the Constitution," the source said.

Salem said any attempt to protect public money after it had been embezzled would be meaningless. "Safeguarding public money should be

done from the very beginning by tightening financial control, mainly by the Central Auditing Agency," he said.

Salem welcomed the court's ruling, declaring that it was in line with the Constitution that prohibits the sequestration of funds except by a court order.

Legal sources pointed out that the ruling would have no impact on sequestration orders issued by the Illicit Earnings Office, an affiliate of the Ministry of Justice, on the grounds that these orders cannot be issued without a court's consent. "Consequently, the office's order impounding the assets of industrialist Abdellah Wahhab El-Habbash will not be affected by the ruling of the Constitutional Court," a source said.

Habbash, former board chairman of the bolding company for engineering industries, has been remanded in custody and his assets impounded for making illegal profits which, press reports said, amounted to millions of dollars. The reports alleged that Habbash had restored to the state the sum of \$19 million but the remainder of his money was smuggled to banks in Switzerland.

The constitutionality of Article 208 was first contested in 1990 by Saad Mohamed Ahmed, a former minister of manpower, who was accused of financial malpractices by the Administrative Control Authority. The prosecutor-general had ordered his assets impounded in June 1988 but Ahmed filed a lawsuit with the Southern Cairo Court of First Instance, demanding the order be annulled.

As the case was being heard, Ahmed's lawyers contested the legality of Article 208. The court, however, held that they had no point allowed the lawyers to take their complaint to the Supreme Constitutional Court.

Opposition discuss 'non-political' co-operation

Opposition Forces from across the political spectrum are exploring the prospects of limited co-operation in advance of next April's municipal elections. **Amira Howeidy** reports

Nasserists, Communists and Islamists are striving to reach an agreement on abstention from the use of political and ideological slogans in campaigning for next April's local council, or municipal, elections. A tripartite committee was set up for this purpose by Diaeddin Dawoud's Nasserist Party, the illegal Egyptian Communist Party and the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood. The committee was described as an offshoot of the Political Parties and Groups Coordination Committee, established by the opposition in the wake of last year's parliamentary elections.

The tripartite committee was limited to the three forces because other opposition groups — the Wafid, Labour, Tagammu and Liberals — had decided "not to impose ideological slogans on the people in the local council elections," said Nagi El-Shehaby, Labour's election coordinator. It remains, he added, for the three members of the tripartite committee to reach a consensus on this point.

The birth of the tripartite committee took many analysts by surprise because it included two major arch-enemies — Communists and the Brotherhood — who appeared to be coordinating policies for the first time after bringing their war of words to an end.

"Opposition forces have learned a lesson from their big fail in the last parliamentary elections," said Ibrahim El-Badawi, the Communist representative on the committee. "This lesson led to the birth of the tripartite committee."

El-Badawi explained that municipal elections are not politically-oriented because municipal councils are concerned with providing services to the people. "So our conflicts and differences with the Islamist trend should not be brought into the election battle as they would in parliamentary elections," he said.

Hussein Abdel-Razek who represents the leftist Tagammu on the larger committee said: "I am against the Brotherhood's politics and ideol-

ogy, but they are a strong political force. The Islamist trend exists whether we like it or not. So we have to deal with them in order to come up with the best results."

But is the outlawed Brotherhood ready to renounce their slogan "Islam is the solution"? "There is a possibility that after the strong government clampdown on the group, the Brotherhood will become more flexible in accepting reality," said Abdel-Razek. "So they may give it up. And yet the risk may be too great if the slogan is their only means of political survival."

According to Abdel-Moneim Selim, the Brotherhood's representative on the larger committee, the leadership of the outlawed organisation has not taken a decision yet. The matter is under study, he said.

For Diaa Rashwan, a researcher at the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, Communist-Brotherhood co-operation has become "de facto" partly because the Brotherhood has no other choice in view of the government clampdown. A more important reason, he said, is that opposition groups are incapable of contesting the municipal elections separately because each cannot field as many as 40,000 candidates.

If they run separately, the chances of success are "almost zero." But if they co-operate seriously, they may gain control of some councils, Rashwan said. And yet, he did not rule out the possibility that the attempt at co-operation might collapse, even before the elections, due to the grave ideological and political differences and mistrust between the three groups in the quest for a united front.

These contradictions should not figure in elections for the local councils which are concerned with services and social work, Dawoud said. And yet, he predicted a fierce battle "because the local councils provided valuable assistance to the NDP candidates who won in the parliamentary elections."

Dawoud conceded that a "strong" group within his Nasserist Party opposed co-operation with the Islamists. "But we are doing our best to eliminate these contradictions. They should rank second after the more important objective of setting up a strong opposition front," he said.

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Egypt and Israel unpackaged

Israeli tourism in Egypt has dropped dramatically, and so has package tourism involving the two countries. **Rehab Saad** investigates

Tourism officials and travel agents are reporting a drop in package tours combining Egypt and Israel as a result of the recent clashes between Palestinians and Israeli troops in the Occupied Territories. Most of the cancellations hit the so-called religious tourism market, namely that of tourists visiting the region to have a first-hand look at religious sites such as Old Cairo and Saint Catherine in Egypt and Jerusalem in Israel.

Although tourism to Egypt alone was said to have been unaffected, operators reported that the number of Israeli visitors to Egypt was declining. Tourism Minister Mamdouh El-Beltagi confirmed "limited cancellations by some of the groups coming from Israel." The Palestinian-Israeli clashes, he said, "will undoubtedly have a negative effect on tourism in Israel and may affect slightly all the countries of the region, including Egypt. But I stress that the drop will be in regional tourism only. The type of tourism that targets Egypt alone is not affected. On the contrary, it is expected to grow."

Sherif Farid of Wings Tours said that cancellations of the Egypt-Israel package amounted to 80 per cent. He also reported a "hundred per cent drop" in the number of Israelis coming to Egypt through his agency, "apparently because they are afraid of an anti-Israeli Egyptian reaction."

Before the eruption of the unrest in the Occupied Territories, Israelis were visiting Egypt in record numbers, ranking only second to Germans. The number of Israelis who visited Egypt between January and August 1996 amounted to 226,805 people, registering an increase of 31.5 per cent compared to the same period last year. And in August, 49,066 Israelis came to this country — an increase of 12.9 per cent over August 1995.

Abu Bakr El-Shorbagi of 3A Tours said cancellations for his company amounted to 25 per cent. "A lot of trips which were scheduled to Egypt and Israel this month were either postponed or cancelled," he said. El-Shorbagi explained that much of his work involves tourists from Latin America and Asia. "These countries are far and their flight tickets are expensive. Therefore, their tourists like to make combined tours including Egypt, Israel, Turkey and Greece. Some of them dropped Israel from their programme and kept the other countries while the rest preferred to cancel the trip altogether," he said.

El-Zayyat of Emeco Tours said that the cancellation of package tours, which should have been expected, was the result of a drastic drop in tourism to Israel. "I know that many travel agents in Israel are suffering because reservations from overseas are not forthcoming," he said.

Ezzedine El-Shabrawi of Egyptian-American Tours believes that the Palestinian-Israeli clashes will affect tourism to Egypt, particularly tourists from the American market. "Many Americans have a fuzzy knowledge of geography and anything that happens anywhere in the Middle East will stop them from coming," he said.

El-Zayyat found comfort in the European market. "If tourists know geography well and if their media coverage is impartial, they are not going to stay away. France, Britain and Italy are sympathetic to the Palestinians and they admire Egypt's position," El-Zayyat said.

For Minister El-Beltagi "peace and tourism are interrelated. Tourism cannot flourish unless there is a peaceful and stable atmosphere," he said.

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Epic memories

This month of every year brings with it memories of the epic of the October War, the greatest Egyptian military achievement of this century. It is a good occasion to review one of the important questions it has raised: Why was this epic engagement more a war of political galvanisation than a war of territorial liberation?

In order to answer this question, we must focus our sights on the decision to wage this war and the political and military conditions in which it was taken. The decision to wage war is the most complex and gravest decision a political leadership may have to take. War is never an aim per se, but one of the political means and instruments for achieving national objectives.

Any political leadership that opts for war must have the capacity to control its course after it breaks out and it must know when and how to stop the fighting. War is not a one-sided activity. It is a conflict between rival powers and wills fought with steel and fire. It is also a decision that must be taken in the context of surrounding circumstances and the possibilities and available options these circumstances present.

When President Sadat embarked on this decision-making process, all efforts and initiatives to effect a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli struggle — UN Security Council Resolution 242, the bilateral and quadri-lateral talks, the Rogers' initiative, Ambassador Janes' initiative and even Sadat's initiative in 1971 — had all failed in failure.

At the same time, Egyptian-Soviet relations were very shaky. The Soviets were suspicious of Sadat's political orientations after he assumed power and there were fundamental differences between the two leaderships over the military option which, since 1972, Sadat increasingly began to see as inevitable in light of the persistent Israeli intrusiveness which had brought all peace efforts to a dead end. The Soviets, however, feared that any military engagement would lead to a confrontation with the US. The tensions that these differences provoked were aggravated by the Soviet Union's refusal to supply Egypt with the necessary armaments to launch a military offensive, such as long-range fighter planes and guided anti-aircraft missiles. In order to discourage Egypt from seeking a military solution, it also delayed the delivery of military components which had already been contracted for under President Nasser and in the early years of Sadat's presidency.

Following the Soviet-American summit meeting of May 1972, President Sadat felt that the two super-powers had reached an agreement to freeze the situation in the Middle East for fear that any escalation would lead to a conflict in their interests and jeopardise the policy of rapprochement they had initiated. This, he realised, explained the Soviet reluctance to supply Egypt with offensive weaponry and its shyness in arms deliveries. As a result, Sadat decided to cancel the mission of the Soviet military advisers and technical units that President Nasser had asked for in 1970, in order to support Egypt's air defence capabilities and to provide Egypt with the strategic air reconnaissance and tracking systems it lacked.

However, Egypt's efforts to contain the dispute between the two countries and the Soviet Union's desire to retain access to the Egyptian port facilities for its fleet permitted the continuation of a cautious co-operation between the two countries. The Soviets supplied the Egyptians with some of the necessary weapons, but it was barely "a pip supporting the water

jug" as the popular Egyptian saying has it.

By March 1973, the Soviets knew that President Sadat had made up his mind to go to war. They advised him to reassess the level of the training of his armed forces and to ensure the highest calibre of leadership on all fronts. They also expressed their fears that Israel would launch a pre-emptive strike that would shatter the Egyptian forces. From this advice and previous contacts with the Soviet leadership, Sadat understood that, although the Soviets were opposed to an all-out war, they would not object to limited military operations in order to spur political activity on the Middle East issue. In a meeting between Hafez Ismail, Sadat's national security adviser, and Soviet officials in June 1973, Brezhnev told him that the Egyptian leadership had a right to make its own decisions but that he hoped this would not precipitate a sea of blood.

On the other side of the globe, the US was adamant about maintaining Israel's military superiority over all the Arab front-line nations combined, ostensibly to preserve the balance of power in the region. As the Nixon administration was also approaching an election year, they had no desire to alienate the powerful Jewish lobby. Quite the contrary. At the end of 1971, Nixon announced that the US would resume supplying Israel with military aircraft and in February 1972, the US concluded an arms deal with Israel that included 42 new Phantoms and 82 Sky Hawks. As a result, the military balance of power was tipped heavily in Israel's favour, particularly with regard to its air force capability which had always been its key to victory in previous conflicts.

To make matters worse, the American administration pledged to Israel in writing that it would not pursue any new peace initiative without having first discussed it with the Israelis. The America's Middle East policy was tied firmly to the Israeli position was amply demonstrated throughout 1972 (the year of the presidential elections) when both sides' official statements on the issue were virtually identical. This one-sided stance was responsible for the failure of the talks between Henry Kissinger, Nixon's national security adviser, and his Egyptian counterpart, Hafez Ismail, whom Sadat had asked to convene the talks in February 1973 in a last-ditch attempt to seek an opening that might lead to a just political solution to the issue.

To a great extent, the Nixon administration's policies on this issue were heavily influenced by powerful forces in American politics. While Israel and its supporters in the American decision-making centres were able to press the White House in its favour, the Arabs had neither the means nor the channels to counter these pressures. At the same time, the Arabs were unable to rally their available forces in order to effect a substantial enough change in the balance of regional power that might compel the American administration to modify its position. Consequently, instead of attempting to pressure Israel into accepting a just solution, the American administration simply sought further concessions from the Arabs.

It was thus that Kissinger told Ismail on 25 February 1973, "You expect us — if we can — to seek a specific solution the result of which would be to bring about an essential change in Israel's fixed positions... Can we bring about such a change? I will tell you that persuasiveness, and even our desire to stand firmly behind that solution, depends on how much we can point to tangible changes in the Arab or Egyptian attitudes... That is the key."

President Sadat, however, had a different opinion. With his initiative in 1971, he had come to the end of the line in making concessions. He reasoned that if the Arabs had to change their attitudes in order to get the US to take action toward a political solution, this could only come about through a shift in the balance of power between the Arabs and Israel, not through further Arab concessions.

As Egypt's efforts failed to revive the Eastern front and to secure tangible progress in international peace diplomacy, the populace within Egypt and other Arab countries was clamouring for war in order to end the state of no-war/no-peace that had prevailed after the war of attrition. The pressures forced the Arab political leadership to move further toward a war footing, which in turn supported Egypt's efforts to mobilise all available Arab military capacities in order to render the option of war with Israel feasible.

Against this background, the Arab League Council, in its session of September 1972, moved to review the political situation from every aspect in light of which they would draw up a plan for joint action. The plan would delineate the tasks and obligations for which the member nations would be responsible in order to end the state of no-war/no-peace which had become highly detrimental to Arab interests and legitimate rights.

In December 1972, the council of the Arab chiefs-of-staff met to discuss the volume of financial and military support each Arab state would have to offer. Their decisions were ratified by the Arab Defence Council at the beginning of 1973. At the same time, Arab strategists met to determine the best means to optimise the oil weapon in order to pressure international powers, and notably the US, to alter its entire pro-Israeli stance.

The state of Egypt's armed forces was also crucial to the decision to go to war. Since Egypt began to rebuild its armed forces after the 1967 debacle, it was obvious to political and military leaders, given America's continued support for Israel's military supremacy over all the front-line nations put together, that it would be impossible to achieve a sufficient military advantage within a reasonable period of time that would enable Egypt to liberate its territories through military operations.

Consequently, presidents Abdel Nasser and Sadat devoted their efforts to mobilising collective Arab action and to reviving the eastern front (with Syria) in order to remedy the balance of power that was tilted so heavily to Israel's advantage. Nasser's efforts in this respect brought feeble results largely due to the disputed and mutual animosity that charged the inter-Arab climate at the time. Sadat, on the other hand, was able to effect progress by pursuing three courses of action.

Firstly, he resumed the process, begun by Abdel Nasser, of building up the offensive capacity of Egypt's armed forces and preparing them for war. Secondly, he sought to co-ordinate with Syria in order to compel Israel to fight on two fronts simultaneously, thereby reducing the efficacy of its military superiority and providing the Arab armed forces the opportunity to achieve limited strategic objectives on both fronts. Thirdly, he co-ordinated with the other Arab countries to support the Egyptian and Syrian fronts by providing land and air units which had been decided by the Arab Defence Council.

By the time of the October War, Egypt's efforts had met with varying degrees of success in all three

spheres. However, in spite of the advantages it had gained in terms of the numerical superiority of its land forces to the troops Israel had to deploy on two fronts, it was still insufficient for deep offensive operations.

In addition, air superiority remained totally in Israel's hands. When Egyptian political and military leaders met in the session of the Supreme Armed Forces Council on 6 June 1972, it was clear to them that there was no hope of redressing this imbalance. The Soviet aircraft they were being supplied with were no match for the latest advanced aircraft Israel was getting from the US.

Over the coming months, until the following meeting of the Supreme Armed Forces Council on 24 October, two opinions prevailed in the upper echelons of the Egyptian military establishment. The first, advocated by Lieutenant General Mohamed Sadeq, minister of war and general commander of the armed forces, held that Egypt should wait until it had the necessary war material to enable it to engage in a war on equal footing. This opinion was based on the argument that if a country embarks on war it should have the capacity to control the course of combat and to determine when and how to cease hostilities once it has achieved its military objectives. Israel's air superiority precluded these conditions.

The second opinion, advocated by General Saad El-Shazli and supported by Sadat, was that Egypt's armed forces, with the weapons that were scheduled to be delivered in accordance with agreements already concluded, would be sufficiently equipped to permit a limited offensive operation, even given Israel's air superiority. The strategy would rely on intensive anti-aircraft missile bombardment in conjunction with concentrated air cover by Egyptian fighter planes in order to protect the ground forces in their offense. Head-on collision battles would be fought afterwards to exhaust the enemy's armour and air force.

The latter view was to prevail. Sadat dismissed Mohamed Sadeq and replaced him by Lieutenant General Ahmed Ismail whose views coincided with those of Sadat and El-Shazli. The political and military leaderships were thus united on pursuing the optimum military option available at that time. This was to wage a limited offensive in order to break the political stalemate and to end the state of no-war/no-peace that was so potentially detrimental to Egypt's political and economic well-being. The armed forces had reached a combat capacity that would enable them to undertake such an operation.

Planning now could move into gear. In November 1972, Ahmed Ismail met to discuss the potential scenarios with the Syrian political and military leadership, and over the following months they met again frequently to co-ordinate operations so that fighting could take place on both fronts simultaneously. At the same time, they agreed that it would be necessary to rally other Arab forces, notably the oil weapon, in order to meet their objectives.

The Egyptian and Syrian leaderships defined the war's political objective as, "to challenge the concept of Israeli security by a military action, in accordance with the capacities of the

armed forces, the aim of which is to inflict the greatest possible losses upon the enemy and to convince him that his continued occupation of our territory saddles him with greater costs than he can afford and that his concept of security which is based upon military and political intimidation is out an iron shield that can protect him now or in the future."

Within the framework of this strategy, Sadat outlined three military objectives for the Egyptian armed forces: to end the state of military stagnation by breaking the cease-fire on 6 October 1973; to inflict the greatest losses possible on the enemy in terms of personnel, weaponry and equipment and to liberate the occupied territories in successive stages in accordance with the potential for this made possible by ensuing developments.

The clarity of the strategic objectives, which were based upon the actual capacities of the armed forces at the time, constituted a major factor in the success of the October War. This factor was desperately lacking in the 1967 War. The political-military leadership then were fully aware that Egypt's armed forces lacked the matériel necessary to liberate the occupied territory in a full-scale war. The precision of the political and military objectives, the lengthy and detailed planning and co-ordination, and the staging of the re-acquisition of occupied territory according to available potential are a reflection of the leadership's cool-headed realism.

Indeed, if it took more than two years, after rebuilding the defensive capacities of Egypt's armed forces, to develop its offensive capacities to the degree it had reached by the time of the outbreak of the war, it would have been folly to think that it could have achieved such the ambitious task of regaining all the occupied territories within a matter of days. The Egyptian military and political leadership was fully aware of this. That is why it set as the task of the October War to utilise the available Egyptian and Syrian forces in a jointly co-ordinated action, in conjunction with the oil weapon, in order to achieve a new strategic situation in the region that would exert the necessary pressure on the US and Israel and compel them to move toward a just political settlement. This is, indeed, what transpired on the Syrian and Palestinian fronts is another story.



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Men-only poll

WHILE Kuwaiti men went to the ballot boxes last Monday to elect a new parliament, women staged protests against their exclusion from the only elections held in any of the Arab Gulf States.

Kuwait's parliament stages some lively debates, but has limited powers and cannot overrule the country's emir, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah. The parliament has been disbanded twice since its inception—first in 1976 and again in 1986 following severe parliamentary criticism of cabinet ministers. While Kuwait prides itself on having an elected legislature, it is often described as being ruled by a "chosen few" because of the restrictions placed on voting. Naturalised Kuwaitis, members of the armed forces and women are not allowed to vote, thereby allowing only 107,000 out of Kuwait's 700,000 citizens to exercise this right.

Of the 50 outgoing parliamentary members, 41 ran for re-election and 25 retained their positions.

"The biggest winner is the government," headlined the two official newspapers in Kuwait last Tuesday. Islamists, however, grabbed 16 seats, up from 15, which left liberals with only four seats, compared to the nine they held in the last assembly.

Before the election, the outgoing parliament was criticised for not addressing Kuwait's major issues, primarily the economy, which is still struggling from the effects of the Gulf War, and further threats by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, whose occupation forces were ousted in 1991 by the allied forces.

Most Kuwaitis, while pleased with new penalties for theft of public money, believe the old parliament wasted too much of its four-year term on trivial issues, such as Islamic dress and banning co-education at Kuwait University. With complaints about the old parliament lingering in the air, expectations for the new chamber are on the rise.



Phantom coercion

Abdullah Gul, Turkish Premier Erbakan's right-hand man, and state minister for foreign affairs, spoke to Omayma Abdel-Latif last week about the compromises one has to make as a coalition partner

Abdullah Gul is known as one of the two pillars of Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan's Welfare Party (Rafah). The other is 63-year-old Justice Minister Shawkat Kazan, a long-time colleague of the premier. Gul accompanied Erbakan on his visit to Cairo last week.

With a doctorate in economics, 46-year-old Gul is a professor at Istanbul University and, like most key figures in Rafah, has mastered Arabic and English. He plays a major role in shaping Erbakan's foreign policy and is known to be the architect of the "friendly and warm relations" between Rafah and Washington. According to the American ambassador in Ankara, Mark Grossman, Gul has played a significant role in getting the American administration to accept Rafah, the first Islamic party to have a share of power in Turkey.

Gul does not hide his firm belief in the Western style of democracy. He was once quoted as saying, "Turkey has a democratic system which is far more progressive than that applied in neighbouring Islamic countries. We want a society and a democracy in the Western sense of the word." Gul is known for his moderate views on political issues. He admits that Rafah will not be able to implement its Islamic vision because it is a partner in a government that keeps to a secular line.

According to one Turkish diplomat, Gul is effectively Erbakan's foreign minister. "When Erbakan formed his cabinet, Gul was made responsible for Central Asian affairs. He formulates most of Erbakan's foreign policy moves, and he was the one who proposed Erbakan's North Africa visit to improve relations with the Arab world. He acts as if he were the foreign minister," said the diplomat. Gul spoke to *Al-Ahram Weekly* in English.

Rafah has been sharing power with Tansu Ciller's True Path Party for two months now. During this time, Rafah party leaders have been accused of neglecting their electoral promises for the sake of gaining

power. What is your reaction? First of all, we have a coalition government, which means that we do not have the right to impose our electoral programme. Turkey's voters chose to give us half the votes, so we have to compromise on everything because the government is not led by Rafah alone. We will, therefore, have to wait some time before implementing some of our programmes and principles. That does not mean, however, that we ignore them completely; we strongly believe in each and every one of our principles. I believe that we are doing something good for the whole Islamic world.

So how would you account for the defence agreement that was signed with Tel Aviv despite Erbakan's fiery election-time statements that he would not co-operate with Israel? The agreement was signed before our government came to power and, as we said before, it merely involves technical co-operation in the field of defence. Before we came to power, we had our own suspicions about the agreement, but once we had access to the documents, we realised that it was the same agreement that had been signed with 17 other countries, including Egypt. The Rafah-True Path coalition signed something which cannot be called an agreement, because the Americans forced us to deal with Israel.

The story begins when we asked the United States to provide us with the necessary know-how and technology to upgrade some 60 Phantom aircraft belonging to the Turkish armed forces. The only response we received was a flat "No". However, we were told that we could easily gain access to this technology, but only through Israel—the one and only country, other than the US, that possesses such technology. We had two options: either we forgot all about the 60 Phantom aircraft which cost an estimated \$600 million or we dealt with Israel. We decided on the second option.

Unfortunately, the Israelis used this to claim that Turkey was associating with them and spread such propaganda

around the region. [Their claims] are not true. Besides, we have a condition in the agreement which says we are free to share this know-how with any other country.

Recent reports have spoken of contacts made between Erbakan and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. Are these reports true?

These reports are groundless. Erbakan did not call Saddam, but there is constant high-level contact between [Iraq and Turkey].

Iraqi Foreign Minister Said Al-Sabah described the "security zone" which Turkey intends to establish on Iraqi soil as an occupation of Iraq which will lead to grave consequences. How do you comment? I believe we have explained this. What we wanted to do in northern Iraq was protect Turkey's borders. We respect Iraq's [territorial] integrity and we would never think of occupying any part of Iraqi land. But in northern Iraq there is an authority gap, and the PKK [Kurdistan Workers Party] has bases there from which they infiltrate Turkey and kill innocent people. The PKK does not represent the Kurdish people. It is a Marxist-Leninist organisation, and they are not only killing Turks but targeting Kurdish people as well. They feel free in that area and we are telling the Iraqis: either you control the area or it is our right to take all kinds of measures.

But how can the Iraqi control it when Saddam is not allowed into the area? In this case, there are some [local] leaders like [Kurdish Democratic Party head] Massoud Barzani in the area through whom the Iraqis can govern the region. But if Iraq cannot control its land and if Barzani and other forces cannot gain full control of the area, then we will take all the necessary measures to control it.

Do Iraqi officials still call the "security zone" an occupation? They know quite well we do not have such an in-

tention. We understand each other and they know exactly what we are going to do and they know our intentions. There is no need to worry; we are asking them to co-operate to settle the situation in northern Iraq.

From time to time, the Iraqis need to make such statements.

Being an Islamic party, how much contact do you have with other Islamic movements in the Arab world?

We have had contacts with some Islamic movements. They have attended party meetings and ceremonies and we have also encountered them at international conferences organised by Islamic institutes and centres worldwide. But our relations were confined to movements which were not involved in any terrorist or violent activities. All we wanted to do was to strengthen our relations with Islamic countries.

After we came to power, we wanted to have strong relations with Arab governments, so we have not dealt with any Islamic movement which might be regarded as an opposition force. It has never been our intention to interfere in any country's internal affairs.

There were reports that Erbakan was mediating between the Egyptian government and the banned Muslim Brotherhood on his visit to Cairo. Is this true?

Premier Erbakan was on an official visit and we did not have any contact with the Brotherhood. But if we were asked to do that and we could contribute to the peace and harmony of Islamic countries, then why not? Until now, however, we have not had any meetings with any member of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Do you expect Erbakan's Libya visit to affect American-Turkish relations adversely?

I do not think it will. Turkey, like other European countries, has good relations with Libya and I do not believe that our relations with the US will be adversely affected by this visit.

Erbakan's Libyan dilemma

Turkish Premier Erbakan's visit to Libya has backfired, angering his country more than he anticipated, reports Doaa El-Bey

By visiting Libya amid widespread opposition, Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan has dragged his government to its lowest ebb. His actions during his first three months in power have dismayed not only both his secularist opposition and Islamist supporters, but also Turkey's closest ally, the United States.

The secularist opposition has showered Erbakan with criticism because he has adopted policies that deviate from Turkey's traditional pro-Western line. The premier's detractors have also accused him of being too keen to talk to pariah nations.

The left-wing opposition People's Republican Party, which has 49 seats in the 550-seat parliament, filed a motion on Monday night for a vote of confidence in the government, after Erbakan was publicly humiliated by Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. The day after, the Democratic Left Party, which holds 73 parliamentary seats, seconded the confidence vote bid.

The text of the motion denounces Erbakan's tour for being "marked by diplomatic scandals," adding that Turkey has never been placed in such a degrading situation. The parliament is due to debate the motion within the next two weeks.

Erbakan's tour lasted one week and took the prime minister to Egypt, Libya and Nigeria. He returned to Ankara on Tuesday.

Although Erbakan's coalition government has five deputies more than the absolute majority of 276 he needs in parliament to win the confidence vote, many deputies from the True Path Party (DYP)—the coalition partner of Erbakan's Welfare Party (Rafah)—are not happy with his foreign policy.

Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller, the leader of the DYP, said Turkey could now see who its enemies and who its friends were. In a joint press conference on the last day of Erbakan's visit, Gaddafi expressed his displeasure at Turkey's relations with Israel, criticising Ankara for signing a military pact with Tel Aviv. The Libyan leader also called for the establishment of a Kurdish homeland. Erbakan had said before the conference that there was no Kurdish problem in Turkey, but only a terrorist group working against the regime. Turkey has been battling separatist Kurds for 12 years.

Ciller described Gaddafi's declarations as "enough to set Turkey against him," and vowed that Turkey would keep fighting the rebel secularist Kurdish Workers Party. In a sign of diplomatic protest, her Foreign Ministry temporarily recalled Turkey's ambassador to Libya, Ates Balkan, on Monday.

Softening the blow at the end of the press conference, Gaddafi praised Erbakan's Rafah, de-

scribing it as the only party in modern Turkey capable of joining the country's past with its present.

The opposition Motherland Party blamed Gaddafi's statements on Erbakan. "If a terrorist dictator is trying to give advice to the Turkish state, the reason is Erbakan's lack of substance," said party leader Mesut Yilmaz.

The reaction of the US to Erbakan's visit was even stronger than that of the Turkish opposition. America was especially angered when the Turkish premier described the West's accusations that Libya supports terrorism as "biased allegations" and said he would defy US pressure and force closer ties with Tripoli. He also said his country wanted to step up cooperation with Libya in the fight against terrorism "of which it is also a victim"—an apparent reference to the US raid on Libya in 1986. Erbakan expressed his view that the "unjust embargo" imposed on Libya should be lifted soon.

After returning from his trip, Erbakan played down a call from Gaddafi for the foundation of a Kurdish state. "Gaddafi is known for making philosophical speeches like that," he said.

The US described as "highly troubling" Erbakan's defence of Gaddafi's regime. "It would be highly surprising indeed of the prime minister of an allied country, a NATO country, to defend a terrorist like Gaddafi," State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said. The department declared, however, that it was still waiting for a full text of Erbakan's statement before taking any action.

The US State Department also warned Ankara against developing trade ties with Tripoli. Nevertheless, a series of accords to boost commercial links and to settle Libya's debts to Turkey were signed during Erbakan's visit. Libyan officials said that the two countries plan to boost annual bilateral trade from \$700 million to \$2 billion.

Erbakan's overtures to Muslim states have not won him the full support of Islamists in his party. They feel he has reneged on the promises he made during the election campaign to cut ties with Israel and pull Turkey out of NATO. Since coming to power, the Turkish prime minister has signed a military pact with Israel and is highly unlikely to withdraw his country from NATO now that his government is expected to face a confidence vote.

The question that remains is why Erbakan should have insisted on visiting Libya at a time when the move was widely opposed inside Turkey and when Tripoli had recently directed criticism against Ankara. Not long before the Turkish premier's visit, Gaddafi was quoted as describing the Turks as the butchers of the Kurds and saying that they had once slaughtered Arabs as well.

Who wants a Kurdish state?

Iraq's armoured thrust to retake its rebellious Kurdish north has again raised the prospect of a re-alignment of power in a region that has seen several in the last decade. Omayma Abdel-Latif reports from Iraqi Kurdistan

In Baghdad, Iraq's deputy prime minister Tarek Aziz warned that Iraq's Kurdish north will suffer more bloodshed unless President Saddam Hussein's government restores its control on the region.

"Without Iraq, without the Iraqi state and without the Iraqi leadership, the north's fate is chaos, bloodshed, destruction and subordination to foreigners and their manipulation," said Aziz.

It is tempting for outsiders to see the 25 million Kurds, the largest so-called "nation" on earth without a state, as victims of the states on whose territory they live: Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

There are, however, complications. Kurds have

traditionally lived in feuding tribal societies. They are still so deeply divided that governments can easily pit one group against another. At least two distinct languages, and many more dialects, keep them apart. What they have in common is that they look different from their Turkish, Arab and Persian neighbours, both in physiognomy and their distinctive, often colourful, dress. Experts disagree on whether there is a common culture. A senior Kurdish official is convinced that far from signalling the end of the three-decade-old rivalry between Kurdish leaders Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani, Saddam's helping hand to Barzani's KDP could create even greater instability in the region.

"We never say we are independent from Iraq; we are still part of Iraq and so will remain. We are Iraqi citizens," explained Rasyid Gaber, another Iraqi Kurd.

The Iraqi government, for its part, does not seem

to have given up its bid to retake the rebellious Kurdish north. Spelling before a congress of 300 Iraqi immigrants which was held earlier this week

further escalate violence. They have come up with a proposal to establish a local administration that would bring together the Turkmen and the Kurds to "protect each other and to fill the vacuum of authority in northern Iraq," according to Turkish Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller. Along the same line, Turkish media spoke of a form of "federalism" as the only way to hold together disparate ethnic minorities in the region and to prevent a Kurdish state from forming on the Turkey-Iraq border.

"Federalism, or else another Saddam... is the only way to keep multi-religious, multi-ethnic societies together," said one Turkish commentator.

Baghdad, however, fiercely condemned appeals by Turkey urging respect for the rights of the Turkmen in Iraq. Iraqi Culture and Information Minister Abdel-Ghani Abdul-Ghaffar described the Turkish appeal as an attempt to justify the American military presence in Turkey.

"All Iraqis enjoy the same rights, regardless of their ethnic, religious or denominational origin. They reject all foreign protection, whether it comes from Turkey or the United States," said the Iraqi minister this week.

Seifeddin Dazy, deputy head of the KDP, on the other hand, said the organisation is seriously considering the proposal to establish a local administration in northern Iraq. The local administration, according to Dazy, will include Turkmen, who number approximately 400,000 in northern Iraq, and other ethnic groups in the region. "The end of fighting in Kurdistan will herald a new beginning in the history

of the region. The situation is quiet since Barzani took over, but everybody awaits the next step," Dazy said.

The next step, announced Barzani in a conference held earlier this week in Saladin resort, is that the KDP will hold elections to choose a new government which will represent all ethnic groups in northern Iraq.

An official of the KDP told the *Weekly* that Barzani was even conducting negotiations with his rival, Jalal Talabani, to participate in the elections.

"Barzani asked them to lay down their arms and begin peaceful negotiations, but so far there has been no word on the results of the negotiations," said Fa'ek Nuri, deputy head of the KDP office in Ankara.

He added that the Kurdish parliamentary elections were not yet scheduled. The Kurds, he explained, were conducting negotiations with all parties concerned in northern Iraq, including the Turkmen and Assyrians.

"All political forces in the region will be properly represented in the impending Kurdish parliament, and they will all be part of the political and democratic process in Kurdistan," Nuri told the *Weekly*.

For many Turkmen, however, the proposal seems far-fetched since most of their population, estimated by Ihsam Cojac, head of the Turkmen Front in Ankara, at 3 million, live south of the 36th parallel under Saddam's rule.

"The Turkmen have always acted as a balance in

this region. Cooperation with the Kurds is unlikely because if the 500,000 Turkmen in northern Iraq become part of a local government, the rest of the Turkmen population will be in Saddam's frying pan. Also, it runs counter to Iraq's long-standing policy of not allowing Turkmen to get involved in politics," said Cojac. Any administration in northern Iraq should be approved by the Iraqi government in Baghdad.

Mustapha Kamal, head of the Turkmen National Party, the only official Turkmen party in northern Iraq, said that prior to any arrangements with the Kurds in northern Iraq, Turkmen-dominated areas from Diala to Tel Afar and Kirkuk should be under "Operation Provide Comfort" protection.

"Barzani offered us a partnership in the parliament and the new local administration, but it is difficult to agree to that with only 300,000 to 400,000 Turkmen in the north. That can mean only one thing—we will be the weaker partner," Kamal said.

He disclosed that Barzani met secretly with leaders of the Turkmen and Assyrians in Arbil where he made the offer to participate in the government to be formed after the elections.

"We had some preconditions. We asked them to change the name of the area from Kurdistan to something which has a more limited connotation. Calling it Kurdistan means that this part of Iraq could become separate, and we are completely against that," explained Kamal.

"The second condition was that this area should not be totally isolated from Iraq. We do not want Iraq to be divided into 'federalisms.' We reiterated our plan that this area remain part of Iraq and that any arrangements being made currently are only temporary. Everything will return to normal once Saddam is out of power," Kamal told the *Weekly*.

مكتبة الأصل

A touch of Japan

Japan, unhappy with the Netanyahu government's stance on the peace process, is striving for a more prominent role in the Middle East, the Japanese foreign minister spoke to **Mansour Abul-Azm** in an interview in Tokyo



Using diplomatic language, Foreign Minister Ichiro Ikeda in effect blamed Israel for the stalemate in Middle East peace talks since Benjamin Netanyahu became prime minister.

"I am very sorry to say that the peace process has been stalled since last May after Netanyahu's election," said Ikeda, who recently visited Egypt as part of a Middle East tour that included Israel and talks with Netanyahu.

Speaking of Japan's bilateral relations with Israel in various fields, Ikeda said, "I believe that if the Israeli government makes concrete efforts toward the achievement of peace in the region, the Israeli image in Japanese eyes would improve. Also, if there is peace, security and stability in the region as a whole, Japan's relations with Israel can be expected to witness significant strides forward."

Ikeda, 59, who became foreign minister last January, said Middle East security and stability are vital to Japan and the world because the region is a major supplier of oil.

"I have repeatedly expressed the view that the international community, including Japan, should make greater efforts to encourage forward movement in the peace process," Ikeda said.

During his visit to the Middle East last summer, Ikeda said Arab leaders spoke to him about their strong desire to end the stagnation in the peace talks, "and I conveyed this desire to the Israeli government

during my talks with top officials, particularly Prime Minister Netanyahu."

He expressed the belief that direct talks between Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat constitute "a positive development in this connection. Japan intends to play a more positive role towards Middle East peace in the future."

He cited some steps Japan has already taken — sending observers to help supervise recent Palestinian elections; participating in the UN peace-keeping forces along the Syrian-Israeli front lines; and hosting multilateral talks grouping the Arabs, Israel and other countries on issues of common concern.

He said Japan is "keen on participating actively" in the MENA (Middle East-North Africa) economic conference scheduled to be held in Cairo next month.

He spoke fondly of Egypt and its role as a major regional power: "The waters of the Nile River have become even sweeter than before and the time has come for more Japanese people to get to taste the Nile's water."

Ikeda is a seasoned Japanese politician and a leading member of the Liberal Democratic Party, the country's largest political grouping. He is one of the few Japanese leaders who take a keen interest in international affairs. His recent visit to Egypt was his second since becoming foreign minister. He earlier attended the Peacemakers' Summit held in the Sinai town of Sharm El-Sheikh.

Ikeda lauded Egypt's "very important peacemaking role" in the Middle East and expressed confidence that it will continue.

On bilateral relations with Egypt, Ikeda said, "Japan regards Egypt as the area's biggest country with which Japan can have economic cooperation." He added that he had discussed such cooperation at length with President Hosni Mubarak and Foreign Minister Amr Moussa. One of the topics was a projected bridge spanning the Suez

Canal north of Ismailia, to be built with Japanese aid.

"The feasibility of the bridge project is still under study," said Ikeda. "But I believe the study has entered its final stage."

Ikeda was asked about Japan's support of the recent US missile strikes against Iraq which many countries opposed. "Japan considered that the operation carried out by American forces was necessary to guarantee Iraq's implementation of all Security Council resolutions," Ikeda said. He referred in the resolutions intended to punish Iraq for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. These included a ban on weapons of mass destruction and economic sanctions.

Arkansas Bill of rights and wrongs

Slick Willy wiles his way through the first presidential debate and comes one step closer to re-election. And Dole — well, Dole is Dole, writes **Tarek El-Tablawy**

"We won the debate," shouted an elated Bob Dole at a post-debate rally. "We've got momentum. We're moving," he later added, almost incredulously. But moving where? Polls reveal that as President Bill Clinton and Dole stood within spitting distance of each other last Sunday in Hartford, Connecticut, voters were somewhat entertained, but not moved. Roughly nine out of 10 asked in a poll said the debate, which, for the first time in the campaign, flinted with the issue of foreign policy, did not sway them either way.

This sits just fine with Clinton who has led Dole in the polls by as much as 25 points on a good day. As election time looms closer for Arkansas Bill and Tennessee Al Gore, the days are getting better and better. The nation, as revealed by the post-debate polls, is buying into the incumbent president's rhetoric hook, line and sinker — at times appearing a little too eager to re-elect a man they once anointed as Slick Willy, Bubba and the Artful Dodger in honour of his alleged role in Whitewater and Travelgate. There seems to be no better reason than that they are confronted with a choice between Tweedledee and Tweedledu.

With no real options before them, are Americans overcompensating? Maybe. But Trinity University political scientist Harold Barger, an expert on presidential politics, summed up the voters' motivation in four short words: "It's the economy, stupid."

"What Clinton managed to do over the last two years," Barger told *Al-Ahram Weekly*, "is to increase the minimum wage, help shrink

the budget deficit, create 10 million new jobs, bring unemployment down to 5.4 per cent, bring inflation and interest rates down to their lowest level in over three decades, make workplace health insurance portable and propose that the budget be balanced by 2002."

If not the above, then what else could it be?

When it comes to character and agenda issues such as a balanced budget, family values and welfare, Clinton has switched sides so often that no one is quite sure whether he is a liberal, a Social Democrat or a moderate Repub-

lican. Orchestrating Clinton's chameleon-like policy shifts, as well as clearing the path for him in 1996, than the Republican-led Congress."

Irre and disenchanted by Clinton's 1,400-page health care proposal and his 1994 tax hike, voters allowed themselves to be swayed by the uterine ramblings of a far-right Repubican Congress led by House of Repre-

sentatives guru, Newt Gingrich.

"In 1994," says Barger, "the Republicans had their fingers on the country's pulse. And Clinton, reading from the publicity surrounding Whitewater, travelgate, his failed health care reform and the aftermaths of raising taxes, by his own admission, 'a little too much' after promising to lower them, realised that jumping onto this family values bandwagon was a sure-fire way of kicking off the campaign trail on the right foot. Couple this with voter anger over the closure of the federal government and Dole lack of charisma, and what you have is a recipe for success in 1996."

But just to make sure that he whets the voters' appetites, Clinton has added to the soup his own secret spices, which, surprisingly, smack of the neo-conservative. One-upping Dole, Clinton has begun chipping away at the Bill of Rights — proposing curfews for teenagers, uniforms for school children, creating a national registry for sex offenders and cracking down on fathers who do not come through with promised child support. He has lambasted the cigarette industry, spoken out against teenage sex and suggested censoring violence on TV. Meanwhile, Dole, when not

falling over guard rails or putting his foot in his mouth, has stood in the background muttering something incoherent about "Character, Integrity... That's what it's all about. America."

Voters, on the whole giddy about the 10 million fast-food emporia jobs created during Clinton's presidency, seem not to be taking note of the fact that the median income of the middle class (who account for 65 per cent of the population) has dropped by 13 per cent since 1973. Also overlooked is the 77 per cent of the country's pre-tax wealth is still concentrated in the hands of one per cent of the population, despite the implementation of what Clinton calls a massive overhaul of the civil service structure.

Well, some have taken note. One chirpy woman on US television said: "Oh, Clinton's right when he says there are plenty of jobs out there. Fact, my husband and I have four jobs between us, and we're still broke." She will, however, vote for Clinton. Why? Because, as Gore is quick to note, "There's no compelling reason to vote for Dole." Except for the 15 per cent across-the-board tax cut he has promised — but polls reveal that the vast majority of Americans aren't buying into that song-and-dance number, thank you.

Still wondering why Clinton stands an excellent chance of being re-elected? One reason may be, as statistics reported by the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Centre reveal, only about 45 per cent of Americans actually turn out to vote on election day. Vidal argues: "As the people at

large are instinctively aware that their visible government neither represents them nor respects them benignly, they have pretty much stopped voting." That leaves only those who still have faith in the executive office. On the whole, the American people are hungry for more capital gains, increases in wages, deficit slashing and lynching three-time felony offenders. They are the people who voted in the Gingrich-led Congress in 1994 — and they are the very group that Clinton is targeting in the November election.

The nation is not, moreover, buying into Dole's criticism of Clinton's "ad hoc foreign policy," which led to the deployment of US forces on various peacekeeping missions around the world and squandered American prestige around the world. "Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is better off than he was four years ago, but are the American people?" queried the Republican candidate.

Clinton says they are, and the voters, judging from the outcome of this week's debate and his standing in the polls, for a second term and expounding on how Americans should define their quality of life in the 21st century. Clinton stressed a vision based on a robust US economy and the promotion of peace and economic prosperity around the world. To date, this much is in evidence through Clinton's continued support of the Gore-Mubarak Partnership for Development Programme in Egypt.

But, cautions Barger, make no mistake: "During his second term, Clinton's focus will

primarily be on domestic issues which, if he feels up to the challenge, could revive around health care, the ever-thorny issue of future entitlements and campaign finance reforms. He will, in every way, stick in the middle of the road, possibly even returning welfare 'as we know it.'

To any keen observer of the American political scene, this statement should come as no surprise. In 1992, Clinton was elected on a domestic platform and hopes to be re-elected on the same one in 1996. To spice it up, however, he has picked up the fallen flag once brandished by the moral majority and is targeting domestic terrorism along with its international (aka Muslim) counterpart. Here, he has got an early start with a series of draconian laws. Clinton will undoubtedly take credit for the recently passed new crime and immigration bill which beefs up border patrol, hits hard at illegal immigrants and their employers, and goes so far as to point an accusatory finger at the members of the electorate who have, as Vidal puts it, "come to hate a government that builds more prisons than schools, intrudes on their private lives through wiretaps and other forms of surveillance, and puts in prison for life young people caught a third time with marijuana."

What then are Clinton's issues and his agenda for a second term? The long and the short of it is this: anything you want it to be until he gets elected. However, standing in his way is Bob Dole, still debating, still fumbling and still trying to muster some enthusiasm for a 15 per cent across-the-board tax cut.

Chandrika's challenge

In an exclusive interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Sri Lanka's President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga faced the fusillade of questions posed by **Gamal Nkrumah**

I first met Sri Lanka's President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga face to face at a private rendezvous. The venue was secret; the island nation was at war. Looking exquisite in a fuschia sari, she faced the fusillade of questions placidly. When I met her six weeks ago, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the major militant Tamil secessionist group fighting for an independent ethnic

Tamil homeland in northern and eastern Sri Lanka, had detonated a powerful bomb on a train in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo's Dehiwala railway station. The exceptionally high death toll — the bomb went off during a rush hour — included mainly innocent bystanders and the number of injured was horrendous.

"It is not only the LTTE which is behind this bloody [Dehiwala]

massacre. There are people, in the south who are also waiting in earnest for situations of this nature to surface. Therefore, it is imperative that people understand the malicious motives of these groups who are power-hungry," Kumaratunga warned. She was referring not only to Tamil sympathisers of the LTTE cause living in the south of the country, but also to certain majority Sinhalese opposi-

tion figures who want to frustrate her government's effort to end the war.

Kumaratunga said that she wants a democratic Sri Lanka where political power is devolved to the provinces and where all ethnic and religious groups have a stake in the smooth running of the country. But others, including the main right-wing Sri Lankan opposition party, the United National Party (UNP), are against Kumaratunga's devolution plan.

Her own estranged brother, Anura, joined the UNP and is a vociferous critic of her devolution plan.

UNP leader and former Premier Ranil Wickremesinghe has warned that his party does not favour the federal arrangement.

Kumaratunga brushed aside suggestions that the Sri Lankan army was losing the battle for the control of people's loyalties in the north and east of the island.

She says her main concerns apart from the war are social and economic development and the advancement of the democratic political process in Sri Lanka.

"The war between the government forces and the LTTE does not prevent us from bringing a majority of the Tamil people into the democratic process," she stressed. "Even as the war is going on, we are trying our level best to develop the only regions which suffered from neglect under previous governments."

The Dehiwala train bomb and other such incidents only prompt her to fight harder against what she terms "the LTTE's terrorist actions and atrocities." She is very hard-

headed; those who know her well say that she is very disciplined, single-minded and principled. I got the impression that Dehiwala was the LTTE's swan-song. So it was not altogether surprising that Kumaratunga's troops recently stormed the last town in Sri Lanka controlled by the LTTE — the Tiger stronghold of Kilinochchi.

The Sri Lankan president does not hold a rose-tinted view of her job. When she pitched in with her mother, Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike, to do battle against the opposition forces, she fully understood the price — but she also calculated the rewards. Hers was not a brief fling with politics.

She is still very interested in academic pursuits — especially development economics. Academic discussions are, after all, more pliable than the hundred daily political pinpricks she receives. But how can an academic win a war? Sri Lanka's annual defence expenditure has soared to an unprecedented 48 billion rupees.

Last month in Kilinochchi where Sri Lankan warplanes — Israeli-constructed Kfir supersonic jets — razed the political headquarters of the LTTE there. The LTTE had moved its headquarters to Kilinochchi after Kumaratunga's troops forced it out of its erstwhile Jaffna stronghold. By all accounts, Kumaratunga's military onslaught on 22 September was fearsome; observers described it as the bloodiest battle on the island for years. It took the Sri Lankan army six weeks to oust the Tamil Tigers from Kilinochchi.

"We must end the war to save money for development," she stressed. Earlier in the year, she met her generals and mapped out a plan to eliminate the LTTE from the battlefield. Today, after capturing Kilinochchi, she appears to have done so.

"From the very outset we have

clearly stated that we believe that the Tamil people have an equal right to live in our country and an equal right to all the privileges that the majority enjoy. We have acknowledged that the Tamil people in Sri Lanka have a problem. Some people have even said that there has been apartheid against the Tamil people. We never had segregation in the form that America and South Africa had. We believe that the devolution of power is the final solution to the problem. Until then the Tamil people and other minorities will not trust the Sinhalese majority," she said.

Kumaratunga is optimistic about the country's economic fortunes because her government has embarked on a radical economic reform process.

"We have offered a lot of incentives to encourage high-tech industries to set up shop in the Kandy Free Trade Zone and in Colombo. The benefits of our economic programmes will bear fruit in mid-1997," she asserted.

"We are hoping to join the Association of South East Asian Nations in the near future. We pushed hard for the South Asian Free Trade Area. Sri Lanka is the only South Asian Regional Council [SARC] country that does not have any problem with another SARC member state. We have invited the SARC secretariat, Pakistan, Bangladesh and India to begin work on an Indian Ocean Rim Organisation."

"We must end the war to save

money for development," she asserted.

"Our relations with Middle Eastern countries are strong. [Reported incidents of Sri Lankan nationals disappearing or being badly treated] have soured relations between Sri Lanka and the Arab world because we know that it is not the Arab governments who are committing these gross violations of human rights. It is the employment agencies. The poor miffs have been at the mercy of these crooks," Kumaratunga fumed.

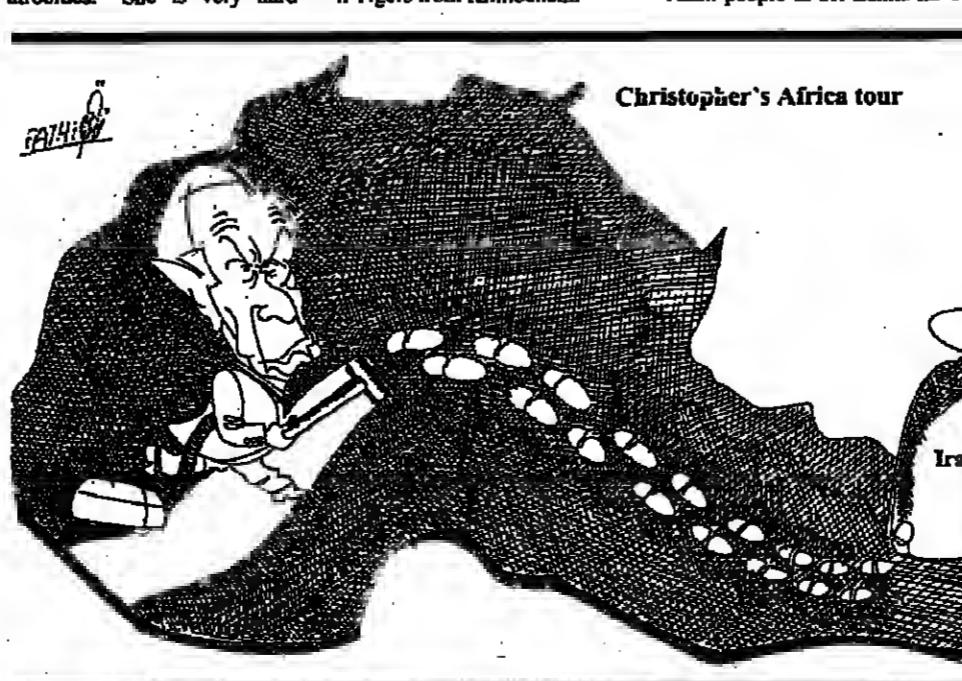
"No, we do not have diplomatic relations with Israel," Sri Lanka's president told the *Weekly*. Does Kumaratunga's government purchase arms from Israel?

"We do buy heavy weaponry from Israel. We have to shop all over the world for the most suitable weapon system to win our war," the Sri Lankan president explained.

What is the secret of the quick succession of recent Sri Lankan army victories? "In the past, the army's top brass clashed with each other," she replied. "We decided that the army should be focused on one objective, namely defeating the enemy and winning over the Tamil people. Another reason for the army's success is the government's provision of modern weapons. This is in sharp contrast with the previous government, which provided useless weapons."

Kumaratunga was vindicated in Kilinochchi. She is winning the battle against the Tamil Tigers.

She says that she wants to win the hearts and minds of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka as well.



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Trust in long-term T-Bonds

As the government turns to long-term T-bonds, most experts believe they are a more viable means of financing the deficit than short-term bills, writes Niveen Wahish

Subscriptions for the batch of long term treasury bonds (T-bonds) issued by the government, worth a total of LE4 billion, closed on 30 September almost as quickly as they opened, with investors rushing to put in their orders. The bonds, known as Treasury Bonds 2003, so named after their maturity date, have an 11 per cent per annum yield, divided into two payments per year. The bonds will be registered on the stock market three months after the closure of subscription.

This issue of the 2003 T-bonds marks the second such offering by the government in two years. The first was an LE3 billion long-term bond offer which carried a 12 per cent per year interest rate.

Prior to the introduction of these bonds in 1991, the government first issued three-month, six-month and one-year treasury bills, which it used as an investment tool for financing the state budget deficit. It subsequently modified this practice, turning to long-term bonds as a more suitable financial instrument.

Montaz El-Said, head of the State Budget Department at the Ministry of Finance, said that the success of the first long-term bond issue encouraged the government to place more treasury

bonds for public subscription. This move, he explained, was a marked departure from the government's pre-1990 practice of printing money in order to finance the budget deficit.

As the economic reform programme got under way in 1991, the government decided to finance its deficit through real savings, and so issued treasury bills. The short-term bills, however, proved to be useful only as a temporary means of covering the debt. As a result, the long-term bonds were introduced.

"Not only are the long-term bonds needed to finance long-term investments and development projects, they also help in regulating the market," said El-Said.

By attracting the public to these T-bonds, he said, the government is able to absorb excess liquidity in the market and, therefore, curb inflation. In addition, the bonds will serve as a long-term interest rate indicator.

To encourage demand for the T-bonds, the government has made them exempt of any taxes and allows that they be circulated on the stock market. It also offers them a high annual interest rate which surpasses that on bank deposits.

The demand on the last T-bond issue, he stated, was satisfactory. "The public trusts the treasury bonds because they are issued by the government," quoted El-Said. "However, corporate bonds are less stable because the companies may go bankrupt."

And, as an added benefit, offering these bonds has an adverse effect on the privatisation programme. "The bonds will not lure investors away from the shares of privatised companies because each has its own advantages," he explained.

Corporate shares may yield quicker or greater profits, but T-bonds are more secure and are not dependent on the success or failure of a company.

Ashraf Shamseddin, deputy chairman of the Capital Market Authority, also asserts that trading these bonds on the stock exchange will not reduce demand for corporate shares.

"On the contrary, these bonds will help further stimulate the market because they will increase the variety of securities being traded," he said. Investors like to diversify their portfolios in order to realise the greatest profit possible. Shamseddin stated. "Rarely does any astute investor place all his eggs in one basket."

Hamdi Abdel-Azim, professor of economics and dean of the Tanta branch of the Sadat Academy for Administrative Sciences, however, is not quite so optimistic. He said that although the T-bonds are a good means of financing the deficit and are less of a burden than the short-term bills, they will, nonetheless, result in the further accumulation of domestic debt. Moreover, said Abdel-Azim, the money would be better invested in setting up profit-oriented, labour intensive production projects.

"The money from these bonds is used in infrastructural investments which require substantial capital, yet do not result in any direct profits," he said.

But according to El-Said, the successful implementation and completion of the government's economic reform and development plan require a sound infrastructure which will help lure investors to the country.

To avoid increasing domestic debt, added El-Said, the government is encouraging owners of short-term T-bills to exchange them for long-term bonds instead of claiming their value at maturity.

A break for reform

As Egypt awaits IMF approval for the implementation of the third stage of debt reduction, Mona Qassem reviews the preceding economic reform initiatives

on January 1993, but was delayed for nine months, until September, when a second agreement was signed on another phase of the economic reform programme.

The reduction of the third tranche of the debt, scheduled for June 1994, was postponed due to disagreements between Egypt and the IMF over the implementation of the reform programme. The ensuing argument resulted in a two-year delay which cost Egypt roughly \$650 million in interest payments.

Disagreement between the two sides was mainly due to Egypt's rejection of the IMF's suggestions to lower the value of the Egyptian pound by 30 per cent, to LE4.4 per dollar, in order to increase the competitiveness of Egyptian exports. These suggestions were rejected by the Egyptian government for fear that devaluation could lead to an increase in the import bill, and consequently to serious inflation. Higher import bills would have also meant higher costs for producers

who use imported inputs, a problem which would have indirectly harmed the export-oriented industries.

Experts estimated that if the pound were to be devalued, Egyptian imports would increase by about \$15 billion, while the tranche to be written off amounted to only \$3.9 billion.

As a result, Egypt would have been subjected to an ordeal similar to that faced by Mexico after it lowered the peso's exchange rate. To increase exports, the government instead embarked on other export promotion policies, such as encouraging producers to upgrade their performance and open new markets.

In September 1995, negotiations between the two sides were resumed, after the IMF witnessed an improvement in the performance of the Egyptian economy. And now, one year of talks is expected to bear fruit this week with an agreement that could make the reduction of the third tranche of debts possible.

The progress made in improving the

performance of the Egyptian economy has been the result of five years of radical changes and new policies.

The IMF/World Bank-supported programme began in 1991, with a focus on tightening monetary and fiscal policies. The first steps were aimed at lowering the budget deficit, curbing inflation rates and achieving a substantial economic growth. The banking sector led the first stages of reform.

These reforms started with fiscal adjustments. Interest rates were offered in a weekly tender, with the government issuing short-term treasury bills that served the dual purpose of absorbing liquidity in the market and giving an indication of market-acceptable interest rates.

The resulting increase in interest rates on Egyptian pound deposits, and the slump of interest rates on dollar deposits, encouraged a shift from the phenomenon of "dollarisation" which had dominated the market since the late 1980s. External capital inflows of foreign currency from

Egyptians abroad was one favourable product of these policies.

Other reform measures included liberalisation of commodity prices, especially agricultural goods, and foreign trade liberalisation, which included the removal of import bans and the gradual reduction of tariffs. The programme then focused on minimising state ownership of public sector enterprises, a policy which helped launch the most important part of the reform programme, privatisation.

Although it is well on its way, the privatisation programme raises serious social issues, chief among which is the probability that a large number of workers could be laid off in the process. The socio-economic ramifications of this problem top the government's lists of concerns as it moves ahead with privatising state-owned industries.

On the legislative front, Egypt has done much in the way of adapting its laws to its new market-oriented economy.

The new public sector, capital market law and banking laws are but a few of the pieces of legislation that have been passed by parliament in the past few years.

However, much remains to be done in this domain. As Egypt works to attract more investment, the passage of the proposed comprehensive investment law would be instrumental in this regard.

EU education grant

MEMBER states of the European Union have agreed to provide an LE430 million grant to the Egyptian Education Enhancement Programme (EEP).

The EEP aims to raise the literacy rates in all Egyptian governorates, with a focus on areas identified as educationally less-privileged. This programme will also concentrate on increasing school enrolment and reducing the number of students who drop out. Another EEP goal is to make education more responsive to local requirements.

Part of the EU fund will be used to strengthen the ability of the national and governorate institutions in the planning, managing and monitoring of the primary education programme.

The grant is part of the EU's 1996-99 MEDA programme, which seeks to provide financial and technical support to non-member Mediterranean countries.

MENA tourism

TOURISM investments will be topping the agenda of the Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit scheduled to be held in Cairo in November.

Egypt's Minister of Tourism, Mamduh El-Beltagi, said Egypt is planning to submit three major tourism development projects at the conference, the first of which is a project for the area of Foka-Ras El-Helma, on the country's northern coast where a number of resorts and hotels are to be built.

"It is expected that tourism investments will increase in that area, especially after the decision to build an airport in El-Alamein," El-Beltagi said.

Another project along the northern coast, in the area between Edko and Rosetta, is also to be submitted. The third project covers the area of Wadi El-Gemal on the Red Sea coast of Hurghada. Numerous Arab and foreign investors are expected to contribute to this project.

"All of these projects are well researched, and the detailed preliminary feasibility study was prepared, including the site, the condition of the infrastructure, location of attractions, expenses and job opportunities expected to be provided," El-Beltagi said.

A princely price for the 'fruit queen'

Unsuitable weather and disease have hit this year's mango crop, reports Zeinab Abul-Gheit

The shelves of Cairo's street-side fruit vendors did not boast as many mangoes this season as they did in the past. And those mangoes that were to be found, even during peak season, ranged in price from LE5 to LE20 per kilogramme, a 30 per cent increase over last year.

The reasons behind the smaller-than-usual harvest this year, say agricultural experts, were unfavourable weather conditions and an unexpected infestation of disease in the crop.

Mikhail Boutros, director of the Tropical Horticulture Research Department at the Horticulture Research Institute (HRI), said

that the decline in this year's mango crop is due to the fact that the mango fell victim to high temperature, rains and the *Khamassin* winds. It was also infected-fungal diseases. Together, these factors resulted in a three to four-ton per feddan drop in mango yield this year.

In a bid to avoid a recurrence next year, the HRI has undertaken extensive research to improve the per feddan productivity of the crop. According to Boutros, the methods to be implemented include cultivating more productive species and solving the problem of the salinity and the high rate of calcium carbonate in the soil. The HRI is

also planning to provide farmers with more productive seedlings of mango.

Although the yield per feddan nationwide was less than last year's, some producers managed to do better than others by following methods which though unconventional, were useful. Mohsen Nagi, who owns a mango farm in Fayed, said he left the crop without watering for three months, and used potassium and urea fertilisers. His harvest, about 3.5 tons per feddan, was double that of his closest neighbours.

Nagi said that he sold the superior kinds like Oweis, Taymour and Hindi at LE6-10 per kilogramme. These varieties of mango retail

for LE15-16 on the market. Inferior varieties, he said, earned him LE3-4 per kilogramme, and are sold on the market for LE6-7.

In parallel efforts, a joint Egyptian-United States Agency for International Development project, aimed at improving the productivity of the mango crop, is being carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA).

Fayrouz Abdel-Rasouf of the MOA's Technology Utilisation and Transfer Project said the project provides grants to researchers at universities and research centers to enable them to assist private sector producers and exporters to find solutions for problems

confronting the mango crops.

Abdel-Rasouf said that so far, 25 grants were provided to researchers for experiments to be carried out in private sector orchards. Studies are also being carried out to assess the best methods of irrigating and fertilising mango crops in the Ismailia, Sharqya and Giza governorates.

While mangoes are mainly cultivated in the Ismailia and Sharqya governorates, over the past three years nearly 15,000 feddans, mostly in newly-reclaimed areas in Nubaria, were added, bringing the total area used for mango cultivation to over 50,000 feddans.

Market report

Suez Cement drops in LSE

THE GENERAL Market Index witnessed a slight 0.3 point decrease, closing at 234.49 for the week ending 3 October. Experts attribute this slight decline in the market to problems related to the implementation of the new Central Depository dealing system. Although the GMI registered only a marginal decrease, the volume of transactions plummeted to LE66.55 million, from LE430 million the week before.

Despite the drops, shares of milling companies continued to be the most actively traded stocks on the market, with the East Delta Mills Company leading the pack as 600,000 of its shares changed hands over the week. While trading of the stock accounted for 15.33

per cent of total market transactions, the company's share price remained unchanged at LE31.

Shares of the Upper Egypt Mills Company gained LE5.5 to close at LE48.5, while those of the Middle and West Delta Flour Mills gained LE6.25

per share to close at LE54.

cent of its equity for public subscription. It traded 479,952 shares valued at LE19.2 million.

Pfizer Egypt's stock gained LE3.29 per share to close at LE18.30.

Only two weeks after being listed on the

London Stock Exchange, shares of the Suez Cement Company fell by LE5.5. While investors tried to get over their shock, market experts cited investor rush to sell off their holdings in order to benefit

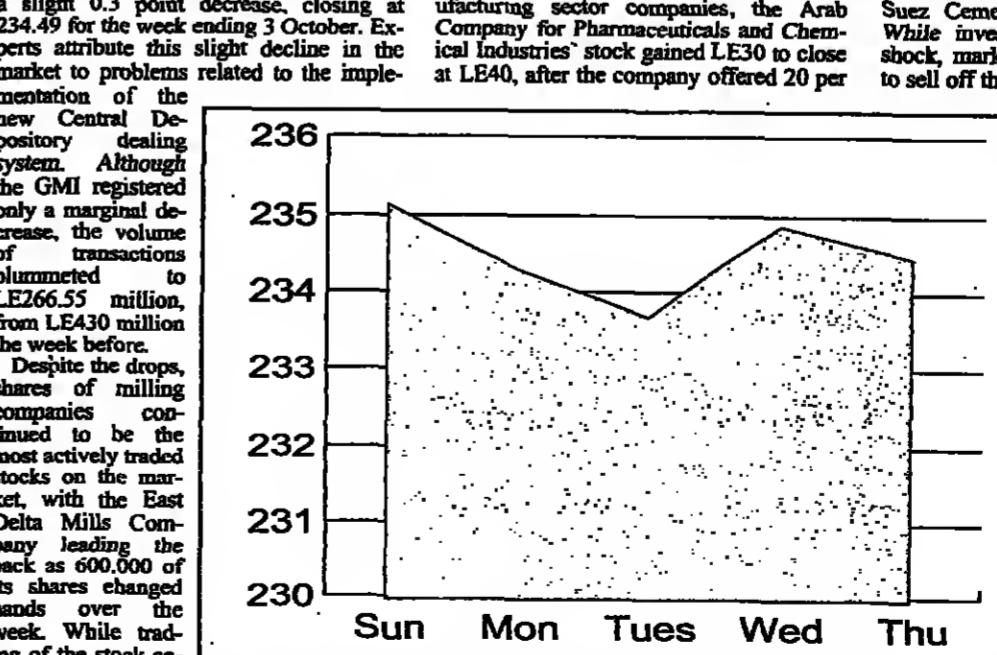
from the publicity surrounding the listing as being the main reason behind the decline in share value. Also dropping in value, shares of the Alexandria National Iron and Steel Company lost 14.93 per cent of their opening value to close at LE45.3.

The problems in the manufacturing sector were mirrored in the financial sector, whose index fell by 1.56 points to close at 284.1. Shares of the National Society Generale Bank lost LE8.75 to close at LE45.1, and those of the Commercial International Bank declined in value by 16.53 per cent to LE46.5.

Breaking free from the pack, shares of the Misr International Bank (MIBank) gained LE9 to close at LE37.5, while those of Medina Nasr Housing and Development gained LE4.5 to level off at LE147.

In all, the shares of 21 firms increased in value, 28 decreased and 35 remained unchanged.

Edited by Ghada Ragab



Le Monde diplomatique

Lisez

- Processus de paix
- Hébron pierre d'achoppement
- Sommet de Washington
- Un échec attendu
- Syndicats des ouvriers
- La privatisation au centre du débat
- Accord avec le FMI
- La croissance et le chômage
- Entretien
- La mini-révolution du ministre de la Santé
- Ali Hassan, nouveau patron du HCA
- Des promesses de changement

Rédacteur en Chef
Exécutif
Mohamed Salmawy

Président
et Rédacteur en Chef
Ibrahim Nafie

مكتبة الأصل

Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

"Jewish settlers in Palestine" read the headline of a five-column article in *Al-Ahram* about Jewish immigration to Palestine at the end of the 19th century. Today, about a century later, the issue remains a thorn in the side of the Arabs, which the late political writer and communist Ahmed Behaeddin had described as "the crime of the age".

The *Al-Ahram* article begins: "One of the important topics to grip the writer's pen and the circles of public debate is the question of the Jewish settlers in Palestine. Over the course of several decades, their yearning for this nation and their passion for refuge in the Holy Land has become so intense that it aroused doubts and suspicions in the mind of the Supreme Porte. Therefore, the imperial government has blocked their entrance and repelled them at the ports of Jaffa and Haifa. It has turned its eye toward their smallest encroachment so as to prevent it from taking root for fear it may assume grave proportions. Thus, no matter where they turn in their quest for entry, they find a barrier before them."

This depiction of the early phases of Jewish penetration into Palestine appeared in *Al-Ahram* of Saturday 29 April 1898. The issue had aroused the concern of the newspaper since the early part of that decade. This was the decade that marked the birth of the Zionism movement at the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897, although the portents of its birth had preceded it into Palestine and also into the Sinai which witnessed part of these early attempts at infiltrating the Holy Land.

There were numerous proposals for the creation of a national homeland for the Jews. The following three foreign news agency reports which appeared in *Al-Ahram* in March and April 1892 provide an idea about how this movement developed. The first story reported, "There will be many more Jewish immigrants this

year than there were last year, especially from Poland. Many families have made preparations to leave and are only waiting for spring to arrive." The second and third wire releases came from London. They predicted an enormous wave of Jewish refugees to arrive that same spring as a consequence of which "the members of the House of Commons were urged to propose a bill of law that would prevent their immigration into England." The British foreign secretary, addressing the House of Commons, said, "There is no law preventing Russian Israelites from entering the country, but England remains alert and vigilant."

Several venues had been suggested for a Jewish homeland, none of which included Palestine. These were Argentina, Cyprus and China. These did not work and the true destination of the Zionists remained Palestine.

The project to settle in Palestine was launched in earnest in the First Zionist Congress that met in Basel at the end of August 1898. The resolution that emanated from this congress read, "It is the Zionist aim to establish a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine and it seeks the following means in order to achieve it: to take the appropriate measures to promote the colonisation of Palestine by Jewish farmers and industrial workers; to unite the Jews with their organisation; to strengthen the national feelings of the Jews; and, finally, to take the preparatory measures to obtain the assent of the European nations to achieve the Zionist aim."

Commenting on this resolution, *Al-Ahram* listed several reasons why the Assembly in Basel selected this quarter of the Ottoman Empire. Firstly, it said, the imperial government had always shown compassion for the Jews whenever they were subjected to persecution in Europe. "The Jews have always been aware of this merciful disposition ever since the Jews of

Spain fled the massacres and imprisonment by the Spaniards and sought refuge with the Mamelukes in the imperial government and took up residence in Istanbul, Izmir and other cities." Secondly, the Jews were enticed by the prospects of the land itself. "These lands are generally productive, the resources for property are profuse, they are sparsely populated and sweet water sources abound — all of which fired their fervour to settle amidst its beautiful slopes where they can fuse religion and the worldly, the temporal and the divine." The newspaper expressed its fears that some of the more zealous Jews in Europe and the United States "would not be content to seek asylum from persecution in the vicinity of the tombs of the prophets. They have revealed their intention to found a colony and establish a state. Toward this end they have created a society called Zionism the aim of which is to regain possession of Palestine and to bring all the Jews together under a single banner in the promised land and other such fantasies. This declaration of their designs has served to caution the Supreme Porte not to permit them entry

into this stretch of land."

While the Jews had certain reasons to believe that their quest would succeed, circumstances would compel the Ottomans to defeat it at all costs.

The Zionists reasoned that they could take advantage of the financial difficulties that enveloped both Istanbul and Cairo during this period as a result of their enormous debt burdens. By offering to rid the Ottoman government of its debts they felt that it would accede to their requests. As *Al-Ahram* commented, "The Jews are investing every expense towards this aspiration and may even pay all the imperial government's debts were it to grant them a base in Jerusalem." Indeed several items in the newspaper point to the activity toward this end. On one occasion American Jews met in Milwaukee "and decided to launch a fund-raising campaign in all countries for the purpose of purchasing Palestine from the imperial government." Baron de Rothschild was particularly active in this regard, paying numerous visits to Egypt, such as that which took place at the beginning of 1899 and lasted three months. There were also the contributions

made by wealthy Jews, such as Rothschild, in order to found charity organisations such as "the tuberculosis clinic for the treatment of Israeli patients." They also founded "an agricultural investment bank in Jerusalem with a capital of 450,000 German marks."

The Ottoman government was engaged in the policy of pan-Islamism as a defence against the European assault on its territories. It could not afford to make concessions, particularly of such a highly religious nature, to the Zionists which would inherently contradict the very nature of its Islamic project. The actions of the imperial government took in light of these circumstances to thwart the Zionists' ambitions to colonise Palestine constitute a little known chapter in the history of the struggle, aspects of which are revealed to us by *Al-Ahram*.

From the outset, *Al-Ahram* strongly warned against allowing the Jews to buy land in Palestine. It said: "They are intent upon buying every plain and mountain so that within a month there would not remain a patch of land that had not been acquired by the Jews. It is wise, therefore, not to permit the Jews to buy land wherever they wish and not to allow them to gather in a single area where they would entrench their power and dominate."

From 1881 to 1903, the policies of the Supreme Porte not only succeeded in curbing Jewish immigration, but in reducing the numbers of Jewish settlers in Palestine. The number of Jews in Palestine during this period never exceeded 3,000, whereas over the following 20 years it rose to 40,000. That such numbers managed to penetrate the legal barriers the Ottomans had erected suggests the existence of gaps, some of which we discover in *Al-Ahram*.

One of these gaps was due to the corruption in the Ottoman administration. Bribery of government commissioners

proved a sure route to permanent residence and even the secret purchase of land. Already in 1901 a sizeable community of Jews lived and worked in Palestine on Jewish-owned property as is evidenced by a report in *Al-Ahram* on 22 March which covered disturbances "in the Israeli agricultural sites which had been established by Baron de Rothschild in Palestine and which were later transferred to the Israel Development Company." The report relates that the Israeli workers had revolted against the new administration because of maltreatment.

Another factor behind increased Jewish settlement was the intensified efforts by the Zionists movement to get the Supreme Porte to ease restrictions. *Al-Ahram* reports that the leaders of this movement "have taken considerable pains to allay the fears of the sultan and to convince the government to sell broad tracts of land to the Jews so that they might establish their colonies. Evidently, the founders of this movement, who have requested Ottoman citizenship for the immigrants, are prepared to spend millions of francs toward achieving their objective." A subsequent article warned that "the Zionist agency intends to unite the Jews of the world and bring them back to the promised land in Palestine in order to restore the glory of Israel."

In spite of these attempts, Jewish immigration remained limited until 1905 when another wave of persecution broke out against the Jews and other minorities in Russia. Afterwards, the floodgates would open to the Jewish penetration of Palestine.

The author is a professor of history and head of *Al-Ahram History Studies Centre*.

CIB on London Stock Exchange

ESSAM EL-DIN EL-AHMADI, chairman of the board of Banque Misr, said that the Commercial International Bank of Egypt has completed registering its Global Depository Receipts (GDRs) on the London Stock Exchange.

Requests for share purchases numbered 22,000 for 3,607 million shares with a value of 1.118 billion.

The greatest amount of requests for shares came from 21,312 individuals out of the 22,000 total requests. This indicates that families are interested in investing their savings in sound investments.



German hockey team to visit

THE EGYPTIAN Hockey Federation and the German Evangelic School (DEO) in Cairo have invited the German hockey team of Schleswig-Holstein state to visit Egypt from 8-16 October for contact with Egyptian hockey teams. The hockey players are aged from 17-23. Their games will be held during the visit. In addition to these games, the hockey team will meet the German ambassador to Egypt, Wolf-Dietrich Schilling, at the German Embassy in Cairo.

This visit is one of many other visits by international teams in different sports to encourage the experience of differing team strategies.

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MONEY & BUSINESS

NBE introduces local and foreign mutual funds

DEVELOPING the Egyptian capital market is considered one of the main pillars of the National Bank of Egypt's (NBE) strategy during the current stage of the country's economic reform programme, especially after it proved to be one of the most important emerging capital markets. Accordingly, it bodes well for the future as a strong magnet for local and foreign investments and as a driving force for the Egyptian economy along its path towards achieving satisfactory growth rates, envisaged to reach 8 per cent by the end of the second millennium.

NBE, which established the first mutual fund (with cumulative return) in Egypt, followed by another mutual fund with a periodic return in addition to a company to manage the mutual funds, has again taken the lead and concluded an agreement for raising a financial pool comprising various institutions as well as local and foreign businessmen with a capital of LE200 million. The said pool aims at purchasing shares in the companies offered for sale in the framework of the Egyptian privatisation programme which gained great momentum early this year.

In cooperation with the Banks' Association of Egypt, NBE has also blazed a trail previously untried in Egypt, i.e. forming working groups for the establishment of closed equity funds with Egyptian investors with a total invested capital of LE1.2bn. Such groups are envisaged to be formed soon.

Simultaneously, NBE is also establishing a number of joint foreign mutual funds with a view to courting and encouraging foreign capital; being the bedrock of the stock exchange recovery and the progress of economic activity in general. Hence, NBE has co-established, with a foreign partner represented by a great number of global financial institutions, the first foreign mutual fund in Egypt with a capital of US\$40 million.

In fact, these dedicated efforts have assumed a pivotal role for NBE in boosting the national economy. In addition to these ambitious steps, NBE will establish, in cooperation with the Alliance Capital Institution, a fund and a management company with an authorised capital of LE1 billion and a paid-up capital of LE300 million.

In fact, these dedicated efforts have assumed a pivotal role for NBE in boosting the national economy.

More profits with Faisal Bank

ABDEL-HAMID ABOU MOUSSA, governor of the Faisal Bank of Egypt, stated that the board of Faisal Bank approved the final accounts of the current fiscal year. Auditors of the bank also approved the accounts. The general assembly of Faisal Bank will convene on Thursday, 14 November 1996 to discuss the annual report on the bank's activities including the balance sheet for the profit and loss accounts, Moussa added.

The figures achieved indicated that the volume of balance rose to LE6424.8 million with an increase of LE198.3 million over the previous year. The volume of deposits reached LE5100.7 million, achieving LE167.4 million increase over the same period in the previous year.

Investment balance also moved upwards, reaching LE5825.6 million with a sum of LE160.3 million increase.

Shareholder's capacity totalled LE151 million. A 5.1 per cent increase was achieved as revenues rose to LE307.8 million in comparison with LE349.8 million in the previous year. Faisal Bank also achieved a surplus of LE318.1 million, representing a 4.8 per cent increase.

The volume of profits to be distributed for depositors amounted to LE275.4 million in comparison with LE245.9 million in the previous year.

Moussa also indicated that Faisal Bank established and holds shares in 38 companies operating in different fields. The capital of these companies amounts to LE409 million plus US\$593.5 million of which Faisal Bank owns LE129.9 million and US\$47.7 million respectively.

\$ 500mn authorised capital

\$ 100mn issued and paid-up capital

Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt

Financial Statement

May 1995 - May 1996

Figures achieved in LE	As of May 18, 1996	As of May 29, 1995	Growth rate %
Total balance	6424.8	6226.5	3.2%
Deposits	5100.7	4933.3	3.4%
Investment balance	5825.6	5665.3	2.8%
Revenues	571.1	508.0	12.4%
Total Revenues	367.8	349.8	5.1%
Surplus	318.1	303.5	4.8%
Shareholders equity	275.5	245.9	12.0%

Through its activity, Faisal Bank is playing an active role in enhancing the vital sectors in Egypt for purchasing equipment and other requirements.

The volume of financing reached LE 3.3 billion through 9432 transactions. Besides, Faisal Bank established and holds shares in about 38 companies whose capital amounts to LE 409 million, plus \$ 293.5 million of which the bank owns LE 129.9 million. The bank also owns shares worth LE 43.7 million.

Faisal Bank also established the Zakat Fund. Revenues of this fund witnessed remarkable growth and reached LE 48.1 million. Part of this sum is given as loans to be paid back free of interest. Loans provided by the bank reached LE 500,000.



The Obaiyed Gas Sales Agreement



Dr. Hamdi Al Banbi,
The Minister of Petroleum
is standing between:
Engineer Abdel Khalek
Ayad chairman of EGPC,
right, and Mr. Roger
Patey chairman of Shell
Companies in Egypt.

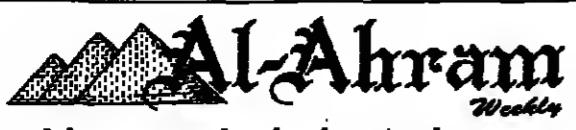
On the 26th September, 1996 the Obaiyed Gas Sales Agreement was signed by the EGPC and Shell Egypt. This Gas Sales

Agreement provides for the delivery of gas from Shell's Obaiyed concession in the Western Desert to EGPC's national gas distribution grid in the vicinity of Sidi Kerir. Gas deliveries will commence in the 1st half of 1999 at a delivery rate of 300 mm scf / day (million standard cubic feet per day). This major development project, costing around US\$ 600 million, will be implemented by Bapetco.

To date Shell has invested US\$ 150 million in exploration and appraisal activities in this concession since 1989. This is the

largest gas project in Egypt and will make a major contribution to Egypt's economy and its objectives of promoting and expanding domestic gas consumption and subsequently developing export opportunities. Shell is proud to be involved in this major project and would like to recognise the encouragement received from the minister of petroleum:

Dr. Hamdi Al Banbi



Netanyahu's last chance

As the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, under way since 6 October, continue, yielding little more than a stalemate, Netanyahu is in a truly onerous position. How do you, after all, justify to the world, and your citizens, the aim of a building a stable region devoid of violence when the means you have employed to realise peace have resulted in the systematic and continuous deconstruction of all previous agreements? Trust is gone. Hope is but a quickly dying flame, ready to be extinguished at any time with the outbreak of renewed violence.

And violence is sure to be the outcome if Netanyahu continues to reside in one world while the rest of us on planet Earth seek to sort through the mockery he has made of the peace process. If history has taught us anything, it is that mindless banters, for which Netanyahu has become the undisputed master, is no substitute for commitment and compromise.

In the name of security, Netanyahu is willing to jeopardise the lives of thousands, deny them their right to autonomy and economic prosperity — so long as 450 squatters can have their bodyguards. But, if the Hebron troop redeployment talks continue at their current pace, the security Netanyahu seeks to guarantee on all accounts will be a thing of the past.

These talks may indeed be, as the Israeli prime minister noted, a "fresh start for peace", but for them to lead anywhere but down the sewer, he must come to terms with some realities other Arab and Israeli leaders have understood long ago. No longer can he allow hard-line elements in his cabinet to lead him by the nose. No longer can he seek to re-negotiate agreements already hammered out in the past. And no longer can he allow himself to embrace the misconception that the Palestinians, and the rest of the Arab world, are anxious to seek anything less than a just and comprehensive peace based on those principles agreed upon in the Oslo Accords.

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures from extraordinary individuals, not ordinary rhetoric from inadequate men posing as leaders in ordinary times — and these, despite failings of imagination, are extraordinary times.

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Al-Arabi: "Today no one is talking about closing the Bork tunnel nor about concerted Arab action to stop normalisation and regional cooperation — the economic conference will still be held in November! If we really want to face Israeli insolence we must cancel or postpone this economic summit. Those nations who have confined themselves to expressing reservations to Netanyahu's policies may then find themselves goaded to action to preserve their interests in the face of Arab anger. Do something more than just cursing Netanyahu!" (Abdullah El-Sinnawi, 7 October)

Al-Shaaby: "In this decisive phase in the region's history, we are witnessing significant changes — from surrender to awareness, from the illusion of a false peace to returning things to their true path. Things will never return to what they were before the Intifada. The people will not remain silent before these massacres, blood baths and threats to the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Now every Arab ruler should review his position and keep in line with the people's will — that is, if he wishes to retain his seat of power." (Magdi Ahmed Hussein, 1 October)

Al-Mussawar: "Netanyahu's reading of the tunnel incident shows... a lack of awareness of the dimensions of the catastrophe. He is trying to convince himself that this is not a genuine Intifada, rather an incident contrived by Arafat. He is exploiting what happened in order to retreat from the peace process and undermine the Oslo principles. He has isolated the incident from the circumstances which led to the accumulation of Palestinian anger since he took over power and up until he triggered the devastating explosion. So can a permanent peace be foreseen, given the contradictions of this strange personality?" (Magdi Ahmed Hussein, 4 October)

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No compromise of ideals

Peace does not emerge in a vacuum, nor should it be confused with surrender, writes Ibrahim Nafie



Are we, as a Western observer remarked, really living in a climate similar to that which prevailed before peace with Israel? This commentator's opinion was based on a number of phenomena he claims to have recently noticed, including the growing level of animosity in official statements fired back and forth between high-level Egyptian and Israeli officials, starting with Foreign Minister Levi and Prime Minister Netanyahu. He also cites the intense media and public interest in the 1996 Badr military manoeuvres, the largest ever to be conducted by the Egyptian armed forces; the wide-spread popular satisfaction both with these manoeuvres and the angry Israeli reactions they provoked; the increased morale of the entire Egyptian people when President Mubarak declined President Clinton's invitation to attend the Washington summit on the grounds that this hastily convened meeting did not provide sufficient time for proper preparations so as to guarantee adequate results, a decision the wisdom of which was acclaimed by the Egyptian press — pro-government and opposition alike — and received enthusiastically by Egyptian public opinion; and, finally, the great enthusiasm which greeted the 23rd anniversary of the October War, which in every respect has become a major national day of remembrance.

These are the "phenomena" upon which the Western observer based his analogy between the climate prevailing today and that which prevailed before peace with Israel. But my answer to him is that peace, although the ultimate strategic objective of the Egyptian people and its political leadership, is not inconsistent with the phenomena listed and the observations he made. Egyptian official statements to which he has referred remain squarely within the scope of Egypt's national commitment to a just and comprehensive

peace recognising Arab and Palestinian rights. Egypt believes that Netanyahu's attempts to renege on the implementation of Israel's commitments in this regard will have disastrous consequences for peace. If, therefore, Egypt has adopted a decisive stance against the Likud's — and Netanyahu's — deviousness, it is only because of its keenness to promote peace, towards which end it is endeavouring by its agreements with the Palestinians.

Interest in the Badr 96 military manoeuvres is also only natural, and certainly does not mark any new departure. Egypt, like other nations, has absorbed the lessons of history, and knows that peace can only be protected when the countries that believe in peace have the military might to back up their faith. Only if a nation — any nation — is capable of repelling aggression and deterring belliger-

Is war a thing of the past?

On the 23rd anniversary of the October War this week, Mohamed Sid-Ahmed assesses the prospects of a new war in the Middle East

encies standing in the way of meaningful peace negotiations. By then it was obvious that Israel had no intention of voluntarily relinquishing any of the territories it had seized in 1967. The Arabs realised that they had to force a military showdown to shake Israel out of its complacency and remind it that they too had cards and were not ready to accept the status quo established by the six-day war.

Some Arab critics at the time denounced the war as a play to justify entering into negotiations with Israel rather than a genuine effort to achieve liberation. And, when negotiations were initiated in the immediate aftermath of the war, these same critics invoked Nasser's slogan that what had been seized by force could only be restored by force. But force need not necessarily mean only military force; after all, Clausewitz rightly defined war as "the continuation of politics by other means". The underlying logic of those who accused the 1973 War of aiming more at initiating negotiations with the Israelis than at restoring the occupied territories was based on the assumption that the Arab parties should not seek to make peace with Israel but ultimately to eliminate it. Today, it is Israel which is playing the war card as a means of scuttling the peace process at a time the most recent Arab summit adopted a resolution making an equitable peace with Israel the "strategic option" of the Arab states.

Despite this reversal of positions, the peace process still remains trapped somewhere between two extreme scenarios. In one, it is subordinated to a dominant vertical contradiction between Israel on one side and the entire Arab world on the other. This scenario is characterised by acute polarisation and antagonism between the parties, and attains a climax whenever the breakout of all-out war between them is on the cards. In the other, the peace process is subordinated to a dominant horizontal contradiction, where polarisation is less between the Arabs and Israel and within each camp between the proponents of peace on the one hand and those of deterrence and war on the other.

The point is that, following the collapse of the bipolar world order, a full scale war between the Arabs and Israel is certain to be detrimental to the Arab parties. Even the October War, which came in the aftermath of Sadat's expulsion of the Soviet military advisors, was waged with Soviet weapons. After the disappearance of the Soviet Union, Israel is the only state in the Middle East which, thanks to its special relations with the US, can count on an unlimited supply of weapons, including the most sophisticated, in the event of a conventional war breaking out.

But hostilities in the Middle East need not assume the form of conventional warfare. The Arabs can resort to guerrilla warfare that Western powers now categorically dismiss as "terrorism". Actually, conventional war — in other words, the dominance of the vertical contradiction — gives Israel's hawks the upper hand while, by allowing the horizontal contradiction to take precedence over it, a strategy can be developed to isolate Netanyahu from the peace forces in Israel and to ultimately deprive his policies, if not his person, of the support of the majority of Israelis.

At the press conference he held following the tunnel incident, Netanyahu came up with the following statement:

"Who would have expected before the elections that, 60 days after I came to power, I would have developed a working relationship with Arafat and offered a mechanism for negotiations with the Palestinian Authority? .. and then you accuse me of obstructing the peace process!"

This statement, followed by similar ones during his recent Washington summit with Arafat, can be interpreted in one of two ways: either as attesting to Netanyahu's success in convincing the extreme right-wing in Israel to move from its uncompromising anti-PLO stand and endorse the peace process; or as indicating that he has tailored the conditions for a resumption of the peace process to fit the demands of his most right-wing extremists.

Judging by his unrepentant tone at the press conference and the "achievements" of the Washington summit and of peace negotiations since, the second reading of his statement would appear to be more accurate.

If it is, then the October War is unlikely to be the last Arab-Israeli war, even if the next war will take the form of generalised guerrilla warfare, not necessarily localised in any specific place or waged against Israel only, and not necessarily confined to the Middle East alone.

If

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salimawi.

Awaiting completion

By Naguib Mahfouz

The High Dam is one of the great engineering feats of the twentieth century and certainly the largest such project in Egyptian history. It has protected Egypt both from the droughts which have prevailed in other African countries and from occasional flooding which has affected cities south of the dam.

However, I would like to take this opportunity to say something a little startling — that the High Dam is not yet complete. We stopped in 1971, at that stage of the project that allowed us to benefit from its water storing and electricity generating capacities. But the dam also has many other potential uses which remain as yet unexplored.

The dam was the subject of fierce controversy throughout the seventies, controversy which I followed with considerable interest. At the time I asked the Specialised National Councils to send me a number of studies on the dam. Dr. Abd-el-Qader Hatem, chairman of the Councils at that time, kindly obliged and provided me with the full file of the dam, which contained a great many suggested projects none of which, to my knowledge, have been implemented. The High Dam is, I feel, a major resource on whose potential we have yet to fully capitalise.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salimawi.



In drawing Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi it is impossible to ignore the Pharaonic cast of his features, a product of his Nubian origins. His eyes are piercing, forever alert. His features are set with determination, and seem always to speak of a readiness for combat, a readiness that all those under his command will recognise.

Compiled by Hala Saqr

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Close up

Salama A. Salama

Affluence is not stability

The Western media has exhibited as much interest in the Kuwaiti elections as it did in the tensions between the US and Iraq that erupted a few weeks ago. Foreign reporters in Kuwait to cover the elections outnumbered their Arab counterparts, with the majority coming from Europe. They came out of curiosity, to watch how Kuwaitis practice democracy and how parliamentary elections in this Gulf state are conducted.

Two weeks ago, when missiles were launched from American military bases in the Gulf, the aim was not to protect freedom and democracy in Kuwait. The real goal was to buttress American political and military influence over oil reserves and to some political agitation from Iran and Iraq. But the situation in Kuwait will remain, from the viewpoint of many Western observers, a key to understanding other countries in the Gulf. Parliamentary elections, and the ensuing debates, afford an opportunity to observe the political and ethnic forces at work in a conservative but relatively open society like Kuwait. It is an opportunity unavailable in other Gulf states where political forces operate underground and their actions are consequently unpredictable.

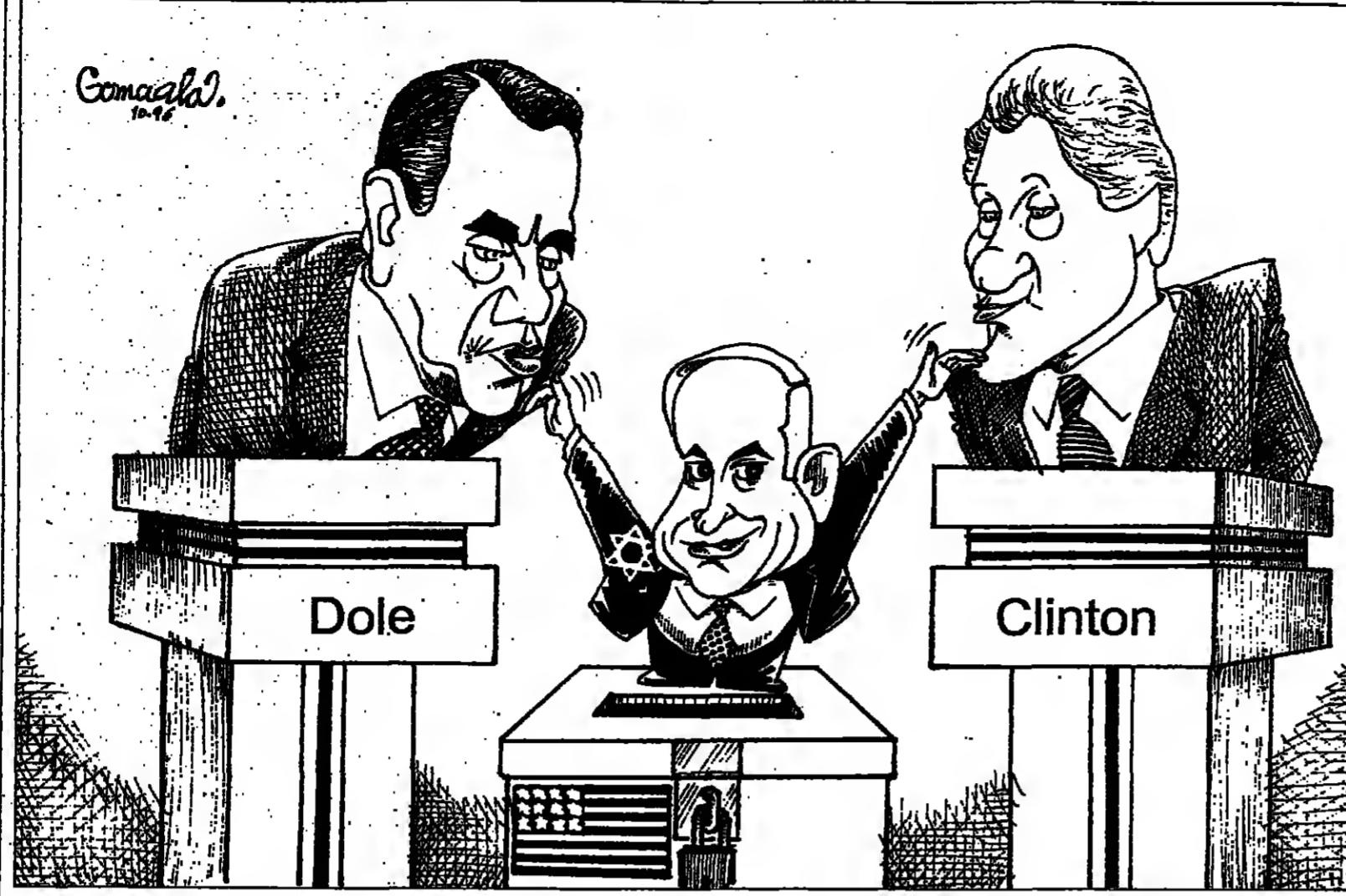
The elections had a turnout of 80 per cent, which indicates keenness on the part of Kuwaitis to exercise their political rights. There was also considerable agitation by women, demonstrating their resolve to gain both the right to vote and run as candidates in elections. The actual ballot, and the counting of votes, appears to have been a model of integrity, with the consequence that the results might be considered an accurate reflection of the stage Kuwaiti society has reached following the Gulf War.

Certainly it would be gross underestimation of the dangers posed by Netanyahu to characterise him as no more than an eccentric, and his political motivations as being no more than an expression of ideological extremism. The Netanyahu phenomenon, far from having its roots in a skewed, individual psyche, is in fact a product of a fundamental disequilibrium of power in the Middle East. And unless this disequilibrium between Israel and Arab countries is redressed, the phenomenon will continue, either with the presence of Netanyahu himself, who is relatively young, or under other Israeli-leaders who will continue with the same policies, in complete disregard of Arab interests and aspirations.

There can be no denying that Benjamin Netanyahu makes shrewd calculations. Certainly he would not be so foolish as to risk infuriating the American president, as he did recently at the Washington summit — without first being sure that he could get away with it, and that the US, Israel's major source of military and diplomatic support, would not punish him for his recklessness.

Netanyahu reads the regional and international situation in a particular way. And unless his reading is demonstrated, in practice and not in words, to be erroneous, he will continue to completely disregard Arab concerns, as will his political heirs. It has become imperative, then, for Arab governments to gauge the basic components of Netanyahu's reading of the situation.

The Israeli prime minister acts on the basis of a firm belief in the scientific, technological, economic and military superiority of Israel over all Arab countries. Israel is the region's sole nuclear power, and no Arab country is near to challenging this Israeli monopoly.



Soapbox

The right medicine?

The Doctors Syndicate is responsible for the standard, the status, the future and the level of practice of the medical profession. Nobody is allowed to practice in this country, whether Egyptian or non-Egyptian, unless he is registered with us either on a permanent or temporary basis. This registration is the prerequisite for a license to practice.

When, after the presidential decree in July allowing four private universities to open, these fledgling institutions announced their intention to accept students for medical faculties, the syndicate was, to put it mildly, surprised.

You simply cannot start a medical faculty without certain prerequisites. There must be a curriculum, at least eight labs for different specialisations, and — perhaps more important than anything — there must be a teaching hospital to train and educate medical students and prepare them to face the realities of medical practice and health care in the community.

The new universities say they are in the process of acquiring, or making deals, with certain private hospitals and centres to the 6 October City, though quite whether such hospitals will be able to offer the facilities required of a teaching hospital is by no means clear. We were also surprised to learn that there is as yet no official recognition from existing universities on the degrees offered by their private counterparts, which means that students are being invited to embark on up to seven years of very expensive education with no guarantee that the resulting qualifications will be officially recognised.

We have already voiced our concerns, and the syndicate has come up with a number of suggestions, including establishing a national committee responsible for licensing any new faculty, after first ensuring that it is capable of fulfilling its tasks, and that the qualifications it awards will be recognised.

This week's Soapbox speaker is president of the Egyptian Doctors Syndicate, member of parliament and a professor of cardiac surgery of Ain Shams University.



Hamdi El-Sayed

Time for concerted action

Mustafa Kamel El-Sayed examines the limits on Arab options to revivify the peace process in the face of a deep disequilibrium in the balance of power and Israel's essentially colonialist position

Many commentators on the Middle East view Netanyahu as an eccentric, a political leader dominated by an outdated ideological vision and out of touch with regional realities. This may well be true, but it does not seem to have prevented a large segment of Israeli public opinion, as well as the US administration, from supporting his 'outdated' ideology.

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The Israeli prime minister acts on the basis of a firm belief in the scientific, technological, economic and military superiority of Israel over all Arab countries. Israel is the region's sole nuclear power, and no Arab country is near to challenging this Israeli monopoly.

Netanyahu knows, too, that Israel is the only regional power that has put communications and espionage satellites into orbit, and that it possesses a technological base far superior to its Arab neighbours.

Israel's economic performance also gives its prime minister cause for satisfaction. Per capita income is close to \$15,000, practically putting it on a par with advanced countries. And the diplomatic position of his country also boosts Netanyahu's confidence, with both the Republican and Democratic parties vying to meet Israeli demands in both the White House and Congress. Russia, once a major supporter of Arab countries, is shying away from any gesture towards the Arabs that could meet with displeasure in Tel Aviv, while the European Community is strengthening its economic, scientific and technological ties to Israel.

Israel, Netanyahu feels, has nothing to worry about in the Middle East. And while it is true that his policies got Arab leaders to meet together for the first time since the second Gulf War, they met to offer him an olive branch and to extend the call for peace. He recognises that the Arabs remain deeply divided, and that they lack the military means to threaten Israel. He also believes that Israel can continue to prosper without Arab markets, since most of its foreign trade is with highly advanced countries.

Half of the Israeli population believes in the continued occupation of Arab territories. Given this superity, and Netanyahu's own perception of Israeli policies on all counts, why should he change his policies?

What is quite certain is that the prime minister of Israel will not change his policies simply because the occupation of Arab lands is illegal. Nor is he likely to be convinced by the pointing out of the long term advantages that will accrue to Israel after any settlement.

Netanyahu's vision, after all, is essentially colonialist. He believes that force is the only way of dealing with the 'natives', and the natives, in our particular context, include not only the Palestinians but all Arabs. Only if disequilibrium in the balance of power — i.e. force — are redressed will Netanyahu and his

followers ever be persuaded to change their minds, which means that there must be a redistribution of power in the Middle East in the Arabs' favour.

But how can Arabs act to alter the present situation? Solidarity is an important weapon, but it must be seen to mean something, not be an empty slogan. The modest step taken this summer, with the holding of the Arab summit in Cairo, should be followed by other steps, including restoring Iraq to the Arab fold and offering assistance to both the Iraqi and Libyan peoples in the face of the unjust economic sanctions imposed on them by the US-dominated Security Council. Nor is it enough to suggest that Arab relations with Israel will depend on progress in the peace process, while at the same time promoting enhanced economic and diplomatic ties with Tel Aviv.

While there can be little doubt that the US will seek to maintain the present military imbalance between Israel and the Arabs, a second line of defence might involve demonstrating to the Israelis that the Arabs are capable of mustering sufficient will to palpably effect the running of daily affairs in the Occupied Territories and, by extension, in Israel. This does not, of course, mean military confrontation, but rather a policy of resistance and non-compliance with Israeli directives and policy aims. While engaging in such resistance it would be wise to maintain contacts with those forces in Israeli society that are more sympathetic to Arab rights, and to a peaceful settlement of outstanding issues, than the present Likud headed government.

And despite American determination to underwrite Israel's military superiority, recent events — the Iraqi experience before the second Gulf War, and the experience of countries such as Iran and Pakistan in the aftermath of that war — demonstrate quite clearly that the international market for advanced technology and weaponry is far from being a monopoly under the control of the world's sole remaining superpower. The armaments market is in chaos, and the prevailing anarchy could well work in the favour of those countries which, discreetly and without too much fuss might

want to improve their military position vis-à-vis Israel.

Those Palestinians who have lived their lives under Israeli occupation know full well how to display resistance to the Israeli authorities. The Intifada of the late eighties was instrumental in bringing an important segment of Israel's ruling élite towards considering the previously incoivable — withdrawal from the Occupied Territories followed by negotiations over the final status of these territories. The mini-Intifada of last week also served to remind both Israeli soldiers and settlers that their continued presence in these territories is potentially very costly. In current negotiations with Israel it would, then, be a great mistake for Palestinian leaders to commit themselves to guaranteeing that there will be no further outbreaks of popular resistance to the continued military occupation of Palestinian land or to the further expansion of settlement activities.

Another front for Arab action should focus on Washington's monopoly of the peace process. Diplomatic efforts aiming at a lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict should not be seen as the sole prerogative of the Americans. The Arabs should renew their call for peace in as many arenas as possible. They should take steps to debate issues related to the Arab-Israeli conflict in the UN and should act to consolidate their ties with the countries of the European Community. They should call for a reconvening of the Madrid Conference in the light of continued Israeli procrastination in current negotiations with the Palestinians and stalled negotiations with other Arab partners.

Movement by the Arabs along the lines outlined above should serve to convince Netanyahu, and Netanyahu-like politicians in Israel, to reassess their current reading of the configuration of forces in the Middle East, which, at the present stage, is the best the Arabs can do in the service of a balanced and lasting peace.

The writer is a professor of political science at Cairo University.

Making use of each and every drop

As the Nile floods into the Toshki spillway, Rushdi Said suggests a revision of the High Dam's operating rules to prevent any future waste of water

By the time this article goes to press it is likely that the waters of Lake Nasser will have reached 178 metres above sea level, and will have started to flow into the Toshki depression in the Western Desert via a spillway dug to the northwest of the city of Abu Simbel. The plan to divert the lake's excess water into the Toshki depression, rather than into the main Nile, was conceived in the 1970s, when Lake Nasser had reached its operating stage and concern started to be voiced that the river would be unable to handle a high flood without incurring substantial scouring damage to the main channel, barrages and bridge foundations.

Under the operating policy of the river, enormous releases of silt-free water downstream of Aswan would greatly exceed the levels deemed safe for the Egyptian channel of the river and its structures. The problem would be compounded if the incoming flood were to be of the dimensions of the 1787 high flood, which carried 150 billion cubic metres of water or slightly less than double the quantity it carries in most years.

To avoid this situation the Ministry of Irrigation decided not to allow excess waters into the river but to divert them into a nearby depression in the desert near Toshki village. The purpose of the Toshki project was to create a safety valve to remove excess water from the High Dam reservoir by cutting a canal from the edge of Lake Nasser, north of Abu Simbel, through the Western Desert to the Toshki depression, where it would empty harmlessly into a barren desert. Any risk of scouring damage from a high flood would thus be averted.

The excavation of the Toshki canal began in 1978. The canal takes off from the village at a level of 178 metres above sea level and runs for 22 kilometres until it empties into the Toshki depression. It is designed to have a capacity of 275 million cubic metres per day. The amount of water that will spill over from the reservoir into the depression this year is expected to be in the range of 4 billion cubic metres.

The diversion of the high flood waters into the desert was not

an easy decision to make. It was taken in an atmosphere of urgency and crisis and was the safest alternative for decision makers to avert what they feared would be a great national calamity if the whims of the river allowed a high flood to follow a full reservoir. In the first place, it was an expensive undertaking: the project itself was costly — LEI.5 billion in 1995 — and the cost of its maintenance from the elements and encroaching sands of the desert were high. In the second place, the water diverted to the desert would be wasted.

Despite all that is being said, little use can be made of this water from a practical point of view. The maximum use would be to grow a single crop of barley or wheat on a few thousand acres in the Toshki depression for a season. There is also the possibility that Egypt's position in any future negotiations with regard to the re-apportioning of the waters of the Nile among the riparian states will be affected by something that seems to show, contrary to reality, that Egypt is a country with abundant water.

Certainly there appears to have been a degree of irresponsibility in recent statements, running counter to established facts, that Egypt floats on an enormous ground water reservoir. In reality, Egypt is a water-parched country at present and will become more so in the foreseeable future, and the water that is carried by the Nile barely satisfies the needs of the agricultural lands of the valley and delta and their inhabitants.

Much has been written about the potential use of the water that will be diverted to the desert. Many imagine that it will make possible the expansion of Egypt's agricultural lands and will convert its deserts into green. Unfortunately the additional water that Egypt will receive this year is a once-in-a-lifetime event and cannot form the basis for any long-term projects. The additional waters of this year are the result of a freak sequence of events which are unlikely to reoccur in the foreseeable future.

What is more, the water that will be diverted would not even

have come to Egypt had Sudan withdrawn its full share of the

water allotted to it by the 1959 water agreement. So far Sudan has not been able to build enough storage capacity to accommodate its share of water. Nor will the bulk of the water that will be spilled in the Toshki depression form a source of surface water. Most of it will be lost through evaporation and seepage soon after flowing into the depression where the rate of evaporation is extremely high, exceeding 10 millimetres per day during the summer months.

The results of years of thorough scientific investigations of the ground water reservoir underneath the deserts of Egypt show its limited potential. That reservoir is finite. It is not replenishable; and whatever water is extracted will not be compensated for. Today about one billion cubic metres of water are drawn from the ground water reservoir underneath the stretch of Western Desert occupied by the oases of Kharga, Dakhla, Abu Minqar, Farafra, Bahariya and Siwa.

This amount of water is extracted at great expense; more than 90 per cent is lifted to the surface from 550 deep wells. In 1961 the amount of water extracted was in the range of 220 million cubic metres, 25 per cent of which was lifted from 27 deep wells and the rest from 1,513 surface wells. More than one third of the surface wells had to be abandoned during the 34-year period because of depletion and a drop in water levels.

This year's high flood should foreground the need to review and reconsider the operating rules of the High Dam in order to avoid a situation, such as that which Egypt today faces, in which it has to spill valuable water into the wastelands of the desert. Ministry of Irrigation officials should be among the first to direct their efforts toward this goal. They are, after all, the ones who struggle with this problem on a daily basis and who will be faced in the near future with an uphill battle with the upstream riparian states who are agitating for a larger share of the waters of the Nile emanating from their lands.

The present-day operating rules of the High Dam reservoir, set

in the 1960s, are still adhered to today, albeit with minor adjustments. They allocate the total capacity of the reservoir as follows: water below 146 metres (estimated 30 billion cubic metres) for dead storage and silt accumulation, water between 146 and 175 metres (estimated 90 billion cubic metres) for live storage, and water between 175 and 182 metres for flood protection.

These allocations necessitate the emptying of the reservoir before the arrival of the following flood so that the water level in the reservoir would not exceed 175 metres on 31 July. The release of the water is set to satisfy Egyptian agriculture which needs larger amounts of water during the summer months. There are small releases from September to February (3.6-3.9 million cubic metres per month) and larger releases during the summer months, peaking 6.9 million cubic metres in July. This is the maximum the Nile can yield without incurring scouring damage to its channel.

Because the maximum level of the reservoir was lowered from the originally planned 182 metres level to 178 metres (see my article on the High Dam in the *Weekly*, 5-11 September 1996), it is reasonable now to consider lowering the lake's level on 31 July from the set level of 175 metres in order to provide an increased capacity for flood protection. It is also possible to avert the spilling of water into the desert by adopting a new pattern for the monthly discharges from the High Dam by releasing additional water during the winter months. Initially this water would be wasted but ultimately it could be stored in one of the depressions of the northern delta for use during periods of shortage. These alternatives and others should now be the concern of the engineers responsible for running and operating the High Dam.

The writer is a US-based professor of geology and former chairman of the Egyptian Organisation for Geological Surveying. His most recent major work was entitled: *The River Nile, Hydrology and Utilisation*, published by Pergamon Press.

To The Editor

Israeli violations

Sir-Al-Aqsa Mosque is Islam's third holiest shrine. Israel's decision to open a 488 metre tunnel under Jerusalem's Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque is a violation of Muslim religious rights which Israel should respect.

Israel must cease its policy of violations and violence including settlement expansion, closing the Occupied Territories, besieging the Palestinian people, demolishing their houses, and refusing the redeployment of its troops outside Hebron. It must also honour its commitment to peace and resume

negotiations for a comprehensive peace in the region.

Shazly Asmadi Behr

Aswan

October memories

Sir — On the anniversary of the October War, I'd like to remind our new generation of that legendary victory.

A few months before the war, a psychological warfare launched against our people reached its climax. At a press conference in Jerusalem, the then

Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Dayan was quoted as saying:

'The cultural gap which separates Egypt from Israel is far wider and deeper than that of the Suez Canal. Israel has an invincible army and its air force has a long arm... The Bar-lev defence line is impenetrable... Egypt has only defensive weapons, if it tries to cross the canal it's a debacle will befall it.'

All of a sudden in the broad daylight of 6 October, Egypt stunned the world as 250 warplanes blasted the occupation forces in Sinai, pounding key positions. At the same time hundreds of can-

ons fiercely battered the Israeli bulwarks on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal.

Using pontoon bridges, amphibious tanks and floating crafts, the Egyptians were able to cross the most difficult water barrier of the canal and climb a 30-metre-high sand barrier while carrying their equipment and ammunition.

To the amazement of the world, the Bar-lev defence line fell to the hands of our troops in a few hours. Infantry units and thousands of tanks poured into Sinai and were engaged in the fiercest battles ever known since World War II. Sam-6 anti-aircraft missiles secured safe crossing of our troops

and interdicted the Israeli warplanes to intercept.

Israel was

Costumes and dramas

Clothes maketh the man. And when they are the wrong clothes, even better, writes Nigel Ryan

Hassan Soliman's current exhibition of drawings at Extra Gallery, which runs until 26 October, is something of an event. Soliman exhibits infrequently. His shows are irregular events, though they always attract large crowds. And if the proliferation of red dots is anything to go by — practically everything included in the Extra show has already been sold — he is certainly an artist whose works meet with ready audience approval.

The bulk of the works on show take as their subject a single alleyway. In a preface to the exhibition, signed by the artist, he elucidates his intentions:

"This exhibition is a collection of studies of an old alley in Cairo with all the violations that have occurred: the ancient mixed up with the modern, the Cairenes mixed with the emigrants from the countryside and the actual daily life of nowadays. A vision that is not that of a Thousand and One Nights, nor does it carry a nostalgia of Cairo in the thirties. It is a vision of distress over my city which I curse and love."

The works appear to have been completed over a period of several years. The earliest in the series, which are generally the most colourful, are dated 1993, while the later works, increasingly monochromatic, are from the past twelve months. This time scheme would imply a certain development, a distillation of different visions of the same place, a study at different times of the day, and night, in different conditions of light, in different stages of dress and undress. Such is normally the rationale behind these kinds of serial paintings, or used to be, certainly in the case of the precedents the artist himself mentions in his preface. ("I have completed the same picture and subject more than once in the same manner that other painters have since Leonardo da Vinci through the Impressionists and up till Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock, so as to establish and confirm the experiments.") But this is palpably not the case.

There is, admittedly, something a little disturbing about these scenes, something that is not quite held in equilibrium. And it takes some time before the precise cause of the disturbance is worked out. It is banal, and perhaps merely the result of associations. Or maybe it is intended. For what Soliman does is to take as backdrop that vision of Cairo — the narrow street with overhanging buildings, with shadows in the corner and minarets looming in the distance, and then people it. He takes the backdrop, the theatrical box sets that appealed to the Orientalist painters of the 19th century, and then he allows the inhabitants to get on with



their business, to stroll between the buildings, to gather in crowds on the street.

Now there is nothing particularly new about allowing people into the street. There is an entire school — for want of a better word — of bazaar artists who take the meticulously rendered scenes of 19th century Orientalists, crudely reproduce them in a few, vivid strokes, and then allow figures into their compositions, always in *galabyas*, and usually carrying something on their heads. Everyone is familiar with these kinds of images — they clutter souvenir shops and hang in rows in so-called galleries. They serve a buoyant local market, and are taken away as souvenirs, though their actual relationship to the place they are intended to remember is at best tenuous, if it exists at all. They are the

painted equivalent of postcards, and equally disposable. They are not — and here I am happy to be unfashionable — they simply are not art.

You cannot, of course, say the same about Hassan Soliman, one of the most respected of contemporary painters. But what disturbs about his current show is precisely the nature of its relationship to the kind of paintings described above. The difference between Soliman, though, and the painters of the bazaar — not counting, of course, Soliman's own technical proficiency, his ability to draw and compose a picture — is that the *galabyas* are missing. The bright colours have been subdued. The light is no longer brilliant but sinister. And the people, in several of these paintings, wear dresses, and trousers, and shirts. This might seem the

lost. And there is, too, in places, a tendency towards Dickensian schmaltz. In other drawings included in the show clothes become merely a conceit. There are two female figures wearing sorts of sorts, but in reality quite naked. These are nude studies though they are, superficially, dressed. Then there are precisely observed essays rather than the thumbnail sketches of the street. Ironically, the most successful of these, a woman with a bundle of laundry on her head, about to lose a shoe, harks back to the nostalgia which the bazaar artists trade. Only here the differences are stark. For Hassan Soliman is capable, not only of observation, but of convincing draughtsmanship.

(For full details of the current show, see Listings opposite)

Music

Cairo Symphony Orchestra: Brahms II; Piano Soloist Julia Zilberquit; Trumpet Magdi Baghdadi; Conductor Ahmed El-Saeid; Cairo Opera House, Small Hall; 3 October

And along comes Julia Zilberquit, Mine Mercury. Whatever it was you were expecting, she is still a surprise when she comes. A burst of bright colour, mostly Kandinsky yellow — clear and radiant. Tall, warmly encouraging, stylish. She smiles, but to herself. Then zip: looking neither left nor right she barrels down upon the piano.

She takes her place. There is the preparational pause as she adjusts her piano stool. She extends herself and transforms the Small Hall into an important area. A thought — she must be able to play, looking as she does. A nod to El-Saeid — then she lets off her ammunition at the key-board. She can play — and how. And so begins a night in the fast lane: a thrill with no spills. Pianists these days come and go in shoes like dress shoes, almost seasonal. Cairo gets its share, nameless though not by any means blameless: Don't put your daughter at the piano Mine Ahmed, too many there already, and she might easily be culled off.

Up to now, the life story of Julia Zilberquit reads like a page of Who's Who. She comes from all the right places and is acclaimed in them. And this is something she knows. There is authority to every note and phrase. She has a direct line to the music at hand and the technique to deliver it.

The Concerto No 1 for piano, trumpet and strings, opus 35 — a striking piece — comes from the days when Shostakovich was one of the great hopes of twentieth cen-

Brief for Joe

David Blake sees dark angels in a blue train

tury music. He remained more a hope than a fulfilment because the steely moonbeams of political Marxism captured and bound him. He escaped, but the moment was past. Unknowable Russia had maimed another great one. This trumpet and piano piece shows where he was — right in the centre of things after the Vietnamese bombshell had exploded.

The music is free, strong, and almost from the street music. It is showy, brash, bold and irreverent.

The Cairo Symphony and El-Saeid wait at a Saturday night disco session. They loved the beat and the sound, like London metro music. Big city sizzle, it stops you in your tracks — something old, something new, a tonic. Some of the pianists who have visited Cairo in the past few years have tried hard to drag classical piano music out of the wax works in which, after a century, it is stuck. The end of the millennium looms. Must Chopin, Beethoven et al be prisoners in the same traditional moratorium writing-room? Being a catalyst on the blood-stained battlefields in the pianistic arena is no easy job. Margaret Babinck is one. Bengt Åke Lundin, Yasser Mukhtar and now Julia Zilberquit are others.

These four have the strength and toughness to positively enjoy the struggle.



The audience at the concert got up and shouted for repeats. This concerto for two instruments, of which the piano is the leader, is a clever dialogue between them and an intrusive and amusing orchestra. Beethoven's *Appassionata* Sonata passes through the first movement telling of disturbances to come. The four movements are bound together not by key but by emotional intent.

The concerto says nothing is where it used to be. The romantic thing must come out of the cupboard, even if it is Mozart, to join in the dance of now, the dance of death. What is out there is nasty, but it must be expressed. That is the duty of any art. This music even says it with wit and colour. So pianist and conductor let us have all four movements almost entirely percussive. The piano range does use finger work, but mostly to rush from accident to fatal crash. Speeds are terrific. The sounds on the way are clean as Bach. No sticky pollution of chords. The trumpet plays a lesser role than the piano but adds acid and knife-edged cuts in the fabric.

This loaded small concert opened with a composition of El-Saeid called *The Wild Desire*, four pieces of a suite for orchestra. The title is pure von Schleben and so is the music. El-Saeid was trained in an international, hectic atmosphere and seems to know both ends of the scene: Berlin 1926 and Cairo 1996. His conducting and compositions are

explicit. These four pieces are more oriental than heretofore, but they strike one immediately as fresh and with the oriental go-around this is not easy. He does it. We are in a blue train, but his angels are more than dark.

Ending was Brahms. Dear Joe, we love you so. No dressing up for Brahms: this is the Small Hall. This piece is very dangerous, very deep Brahms.

El-Saeid knows Brahms and always proceeds to undress him. Garment by garment is peeled off until, stopping where local propriety demands, he shows the sacred old icon, sans beard, black suit and garters, in wide-leg pants and sloppy jacket, striding along, coping with the awful comedy of life.

The serenade looks long on the page though it is not. Positively brief for Joe, it begins softly vernal and then grows burly. There are robust sounds deep and *blow*, plants with cold autumnal lights floating over the top. It proceeds as a hefty serenade. The music gives strong plucking effects on the piano with yelps from the trumpet. Imagination, enjoyment, explosion: a great spacious occasion in the Small Hall. Here is the piano going into the twenty first century with Shostakovich's blessing and the wondrous dazzle and fury of Julia Zilberquit.

This loaded small concert opened with a composition of El-Saeid called *The Wild Desire*, four pieces of a suite for orchestra. The title is pure von Schleben and so is the music. El-Saeid was trained in an international, hectic atmosphere and seems to know both ends of the scene: Berlin 1926 and Cairo 1996. His conducting and compositions are

most mundane of observations but it is what lies behind the tension in a number of these works. They simply do not conform to the usual picture, a picture that has been fixed and remained unquestioned for so long that the cliché has refined into truth. Minaret equals tradition equals *galabya* equals picturesque equals saleable. The last part of the equation remains, of course, perfectly true though the little red dots imply that other things, too, are saleable, though perhaps to a more knowing, a more self-satisfied middle class. The fact that Soliman's mix of traditional architecture (despite what the preface says, it is really not his intention to record the intrusion of modern, gaudy, concrete constructions in traditional quarters) with Western dress should provoke that initial feeling of something being not quite right shows how deep one pictorial cliché can run.

For my money the most convincing pictures in this exhibition are those with people wearing the mixture of clothes that you do actually see in alleyways. But Hassan Soliman has chosen to schematise his particular brand of realism and all too often places his figures in shadow, or in silhouette, so that the exact description of the garments, and hence the, in retrospect, shocking shock value of the pictures, is lost. And there is, too, in places, a tendency towards Dickensian schmaltz.

In other drawings included in the show clothes become merely a conceit. There are two female figures wearing sorts of sorts, but in reality quite naked. These are nude studies though they are, superficially, dressed. Then there are precisely observed essays rather than the thumbnail sketches of the street. Ironically, the most successful of these, a woman with a bundle of laundry on her head, about to lose a shoe, harks back to the nostalgia which the bazaar artists trade. Only here the differences are stark. For Hassan Soliman is capable, not only of observation, but of convincing draughtsmanship.

(For full details of the current show, see Listings opposite)

Listings

EXHIBITIONS

Hassan Soliman (Paintings) Extra Gallery, 5 El-Nasr St, Zamalek. Tel 340 6293. Daily 10.30am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 26 Oct. A rare showing of works by one of Egypt's most celebrated painters, concentrated on the alleyway Khan Kader.

Mahmoud Self Al-Ali (Paintings) Cairo Gallery, 17 Yusef El-Gamal St, Bob El-Luk. Tel 393 1764. Daily exc Sun. 1pm-8pm. Until 26 Oct.

Mohamed Saeid (Paintings) El-Saeid Gallery, Main Campus, AUC, El-Sherif Khan St Tel 357 5436. Daily exc Fri & Sat. 1pm-8pm. Until 10 Oct.

Aziz El-Helmy (Paintings) El-Sherif Khan St, Downtown. Tel 777 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 5pm & 8pm. Until 26 Oct.

El-Saeid (Paintings) El-Sherif Khan St, Downtown. Tel 340 6293. Daily 10am-8pm. Until 26 Oct.

Egyptian Institute (Paintings) Netherlands Institute for Archaeology, 10 El-Sherif Khan St Tel 340 0076. Daily exc Sat & Sun. 9am-2pm.

Fayrouz Al-Asadi (Paintings) Salama Gallery, 364 Ahmed Orabi St, Mokattam. Tel 346 5242. Daily exc Fri, 1pm-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 10 Oct.

Leila Izet (Paintings) El-Sherif Khan St, Downtown. Tel 340 6293. Daily 10am-8pm. Until 26 Oct.

Miriam & Fathia (Paintings) Cairo Art Center, 25 & 5 El-Sherif Khan St, Downtown. Tel 340 8211. Daily exc Fri. 10am-1.30pm & 6pm-10pm. Until 15 Oct.

Ismail (Paintings) El-Sherif Khan St, Downtown. Tel 340 6293. Daily 10am-8pm. Until 26 Oct.

Deborah Doyle (Paintings) El-Sherif Khan St, Downtown. Tel 340 6293. Daily 10am-8pm. Until 26 Oct.

Nader Taher (Paintings) El-Sherif Khan St, Downtown. Tel 340 5349. Daily exc Sun. 10.30am-3pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 26 Oct.

The Cairo Art Guild (Paintings) El-Sherif Khan St, Downtown. Tel 340 6293. Daily 10am-8pm. Until 26 Oct.

The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil (Paintings) El-Sherif Khan St, Downtown. Tel 340 5349. Daily 10am-8pm. Until 26 Oct.

Egyptian Museum (Paintings) El-Sherif Khan St, Downtown. Tel 340 6293. Daily 10am-8pm. Until 26 Oct.

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The death last week of Mohamed Shebl, film director, radio personality and for many years' Al-Ahram Weekly's film critic, was received with sadness by his colleagues in the film industry. Hala Halim spoke to his fellow professionals about a man who could be 'wickedly funny' without malice, and who, whatever the obstacles, remained determined to see the bright side of life



To be wickedly funny

"I met Mohamed sometime in 1979. I was living in Beirut then and I came to Cairo to meet Youssra Chahine who had just made *Istahdiya Leih?* (Alexandria Why?). Mohamed was preparing *Anyab* (Fangs). He had a company of his own and the company operated through Misr International, Youssra Chahine's company. We became friends immediately; we had a lot in common and he was very funny. He invited me to see the rushes of *Anyab*, which I first time in my life I saw rushes (these are all the shots you've taken that you watch without sound, to decide what you want to use). It was terrifying; I remember it was the most boring experience I had ever gone through in my life. And I remember behaving sort of rudely — I talked during the screening, but he was very patient and courteous. It was Chahine who told me to shut up at one point when I became out of hand."

Now, every time I see rushes, I know the anguish any director goes through because what you see is always either how stupid your dream was or how poor its execution. It's always a horrible experience to watch your own rushes, but you have to because it's work. It's that very anguish moment when you ask yourself is this what I wanted or not. I think Mohamed was thinking that way at the time, but I know that if anybody in my rush screenings dared behave the way I behaved, I would have killed him. Well, Mohamed didn't kill me, and we became great friends.

Then we saw a lot of each other, and I watched his films. I always had a problem with his films. The fundamental problem I had with Mohamed's films is that he wanted to specialise in a particular genre, the horror film. I think the tragedy of wanting to do horror films in a country like Egypt is that... well, you know for example that a film like *The Exorcist* was banned here. And *Rosemary's Baby*, although it was shown, was shown with trepidation.

Horror films are basically religious films; there is this fundamental thing of the battle between good and evil which are religious notions and in a country where the sole arbiter of religion is Al-Azhar, you are bound to make concessions.

This morning I was asking myself what is it that really bothered me about Mohamed? Why was it that while we were such close friends in life, when it came to his films I always had an ambivalent feeling. Ahmed Kasseb, who is a very dear friend of mine and of Shebl's, and who is a filmmaker himself, made a very sharp remark when he saw *Tawiza* (Talisman), to the effect that it was rare to find someone enjoying so much the actual fact of making a film and showing it in his films like Mohamed Shebl. It was obvious that for him making films was like playing with a big toy. He was behaving like a child, fooling around with a wonderful toy and communicating this to the spectator. And this is absolutely true, it is an aspect of

Mohamed's filmmaking that comes across. I remember in *Anyab* it totally came through in his choice of Hassan El-Imam in his choice of Adawiya and the songs he had commissioned for the film. The songs were great fun and Mohamed was the first to have discovered a potential genius in Adawiya. We used to be incredible snobs; we'd just emerged from the students' movement and to us Ahmed Adawiya was lucky. Mohamed had the feeling that Adawiya could move so many people with his singing and with his rhythm. He is definitely a genius about whom Mohamed was a hundred per cent right and I, I am ashamed to admit, was wrong. There was something, again this sense of perceiving — and I liked this about Mohamed — of provocation. Because the bourgeoisie thought Ahmed Adawiya not frequentable, it was not quite in good taste to cast him.

There was this impossible aspect to Mohamed which, in my opinion, was at once his strength and his undoing — how stupid your dream was or how poor its execution.

His readiness to make concessions. Hence his horror films, where you felt he was saying, OK, I like horror films but I'll let it go through. So you got these very warped

scenarios that end up in "There is no God but Allah" and the Qur'an, although you knew that Mohamed's attitude to life

was not exactly that. And all the horror and monstrous effects, both thematically and on the level of production, were toned down and did not develop, partly because production conditions did not allow it, and partly because Al-Azhar would not condone it and the censor would therefore ban it. And he just cornered himself in this movie genre. The way he related to horror films was similar to the way he related to the *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, a B-movie horror musical, which was very camp — came aesthetics, Frankenstein as a transvestite, very outrageous. You felt Mohamed's wish was to be able to express himself through camp, through genres... etc, but always he made concessions precisely when it came to expressing himself, because, I think, he never had a producer.

He did *mugawwalat* films, "contractor" films, which were very common in the 70s and 80s. The Saudis would say we need videos and here is a budget which they gave to a producer. This meant that you had to shoot the film in ten days, and with stars who were pre-assigned. So "contractors' films" did not really have a producer. Most of Mohamed's feature films were contractors' films: *Tawiza* (Talisman), *Kabous* (Nightmare) and *Gharan wa Intiqam bil-Sator* (Love and Revenge with a Cleaver). The only film he made with his own money — and it was well-produced — was *Anyab*. He invested a lot in it; it cost a lot for the time it was made in, but it's good production value. At the same time, it was incredible how he pushed the genre of *mugawwalat* films to its limit — using, for example, his friendship with Youssra to get her to work with him (and she would do it for Mohamed). Using his know-how, he would invent incredible little tricks for peanuts — these were, in fact, no-budget rather than low-budget films. He could have expressed himself much more, making more accomplished films, because aesthetics do count, and as an artist part of expressing yourself is to make a film that looks good, a film in which you can't put the blame for its not looking good on anybody but yourself. But he always had the valid excuse of not having the money to do what he wanted to do. So there was a frustration there.

I used to have fights about this with him, I used to tell

him: he was very naive somewhere, and he was very perverse somewhere else. It was as if he said to himself, OK, I'll go and I'll present

to abide by all the rules, then I'll turn the tables round on them, and I'm going to subvert it all, and prevent it all. And he got through that way.

There was no reason why he should stop making films, except that — and this was, I think, the fatal mistake, where you feel for the concessions you've made because you are so dependent on an industry which is unhealthy — when this kind of production fell and Saudi Arabia stopped funding *mugawwalat* films, many people stopped working. Those of them who managed to continue did so in TV, but they did not have this subversiveness and perversity of Mohamed's, which couldn't be accommodated on TV. Nor did he want to: cinema, though he earned a living by it, was for him primarily a pleasure, which would not have been fulfilled by TV films or serials.

So the second best thing he could do was documentaries. He did the documentary on Youssra Chahine, whom he loved very much, and it's quite good. It shows a profound knowledge of the films. You really feel Mohamed knew what he was talking about, knew what shots to pick out. And again this sense of enjoyment of cinema comes across incredibly. And he did video clips for singers. There is something which is very cinematic about MTV: you toy around with film, you toy around with music. And there were, of course, his radio programmes.

I dislike looking at Mohamed as simply a victim or a tragic figure — which he is in a sense. Professionally, I think, what was tragic about him was that he was potentially a very sophisticated and cultured filmmaker who thought the best way to make films was to abide totally by the rules of the market. But the market is warped, and warped to the extent that it is fake. There was, then, a big misunderstanding which, I think, lay behind his making no films for a period of five or six years. But I know he was working on something for the last two years. So although I dislike this image of him as a tragic figure, it is to some extent true. But then there is another image which will always be the one I keep of Mohamed — that of a very witty and very funny person, someone who was sharp-tongued and at the same time very kind-hearted. There was no evil in his wickedness."

This is perhaps what characterised Shebl's writing. He could be scathing and at the same time hilariously funny. Describing the role of a female star, for example, Shebl writes: "In dirty, tattered jeans she drives her jeep like she was in a formula one grand prix. Her extra bleached blonde hair is left to buff and puff like it was going to blow the whole house down and her language would make a sailor blush."

But and this is in keeping with Shebl's character, he gives everyone in the film their due. "It would be unfair", he says, "to overlook the superb cinematography by... or the slick editing by... but the music, and especially the songs, amount to overkill." The oscillation between sarcasm and praise which characterised his reviews in fact reflected his passion for cinema and his apprehension about the local industry and its impending disintegration.

On the death of Salah Abu Seif, he published an evaluation of the director who, through career lasting over half a century, was to leave an indelible imprint on the shape of Egyptian cinema. His article, entitled "Citizen of Egypt", is a great tribute to a great man. An essay in biography, it provides rigorous analysis of the school of Salah Abu Seif. Ending his article, Shebl writes: "There was a heavy, uneasy feeling on that sad morning when filmmakers and heroes of his students and fans gathered silently at his dignified funeral. It is a feeling that will continue for a very long time."

The same heavy, uneasy feeling is likely to continue among Mohamed Shebl's colleagues, both here at the Weekly and in the film world.

Mursi Saad El-Din



L-r: Mohamed Shebl on location; in a memorable cameo appearance with Nabila Ebeid in *Al-Rayqa Wal-Siyasi* (The Belly-dancer and the Politician)

This awful not knowing

By Isa'd Younis

The film *Gharan wa Intiqam bil-Sator* (Love and Revenge with a Cleaver) was the first film which Mohamed and I actually completed together. But there were a great many other ideas and projects on which we had collaborated.

I first met Mohamed; almost 12 years ago, at Youssra's house; he was her friend. It took less than five minutes for us to become friends, simply because we were on the same wavelength. He was such an ironic character, such a smiling creature. We found that we spoke the same language, saw things from the same perspective. It was almost as if we had been friends since childhood.

I shared his dreams about many things, dreams that never came to fruition. It was in 1979 that we made *Gharan wa Intiqam bil-Sator* (Love and Revenge with a Cleaver). There were, of course the usual production shortcomings — all the problems he faced which wore out his dreams, one after the other. Otherwise we laughed for hours on end. That's how he was, always laughing at his own problems, joking about all the drawbacks. He was such fun. And we went on with the

film: we had to shoot the movie, facing all the setbacks — he couldn't have any of the special effects he wanted. And I think this was the pattern throughout his career. He would write the screenplay with a certain vision and then, bit by bit, it would all be destroyed.

And yes, he was different from other directors. But he had to give up many of his demands and requirements. He had to make the concessions he made because he had gone through dire straits. To produce his first film, *Anyab* (Fangs), he had sold a very valuable plot of land for peanuts, but he had believed so strongly in the idea of the film. But then he ran into problems, even in the casting. His choice for the male lead was Adel Imam, but for certain reasons he couldn't get him. So he turned to Ahmed Adawiya, who was not so important as to warrant the sacrifice of selling the land at that price. But then Mohamed was always an adventurer, and a bit suicidal. And despite his many talents and assets, he was a very shy person, so shy that often he would forgo his rights. His failing was that he made concessions. Yet, this is in

the nature of the industry: the producers may well agree to your demands, but as soon as the cameras start rolling, they say you can't have this and you can't have that. So either you get on with it or you have to make a big fuss.

Aside from this he was a kind of cultural institution, and a very informed viewer.

His knowledge was vast and spanned so many fields. And he was the best film critic I ever encountered. He was also an accomplished emcee, a radio announcer, a

translator, and vastly knowledgeable about all forms of Western music. Yet he did not know how to make a dream come true for the major problems in his life, and that may, perhaps, have killed him.

He had several projects for films lined up. One was to be a satire on well-known themes and scenes in Egyptian cinema. He also had the project of a sequel to *Tawiza* (Talisman) — *Tawiza II*. He had a project for a programme we were to film on Thursday; he died on Tuesday or early Wednesday morning. He was very en-

thusiastic about this programme and had made all the necessary preparatory arrangements for it. He had

met the managers of the satellite channel sponsoring this programme and they were all totally enchanted by him, to the extent that the head of the network, who is based in Beirut and had met him only once, called me up in a terrible state. He said he wanted to take a plane here immediately. He couldn't believe that this man who was so full of life and knowledge and wit could just withdraw so easily.

But it seems to me that it was his long depression that made him withdraw. He had an overwhelming number of problems, problems it would have been very hard for anybody to endure. These, compounded by his long depression, were coupled with vulnerability, though he seemed quite tough he was actually very fragile.

One of the reasons for his depression was the collapse of the Egyptian film industry, which led him to pity not himself but the entire *metier*. And all this is apart from his private, personal problems.

As to Mohamed as a friend, he was something else. For the past two months, for example, I needed his help in gathering information for my daughter who is studying international relations in London. She would be researching, for instance, the 1956 crisis in Egypt, after the nationalisation of the Suez Canal. So I'd call him up and say: "Mohamed, what was Eisenhower's response when Nasser nationalised the Canal?" In less than half an hour he'd turn up with files and books and computer diskettes and he'd stay up from 11pm to 9 or 10am, compiling the material needed.

About the person himself, suffice it to say that he'd been living with his mother since his brother committed suicide 27 years ago. And then, six years ago, his mother became paralysed. He was totally devoted to serving her — with all the details that this involves. And therefore he had no private life. He was this chubby child. The smallest thing you gave him — a bar of chocolate — made him happy: because he did not have any time for himself, did not have time to live like everyone else."

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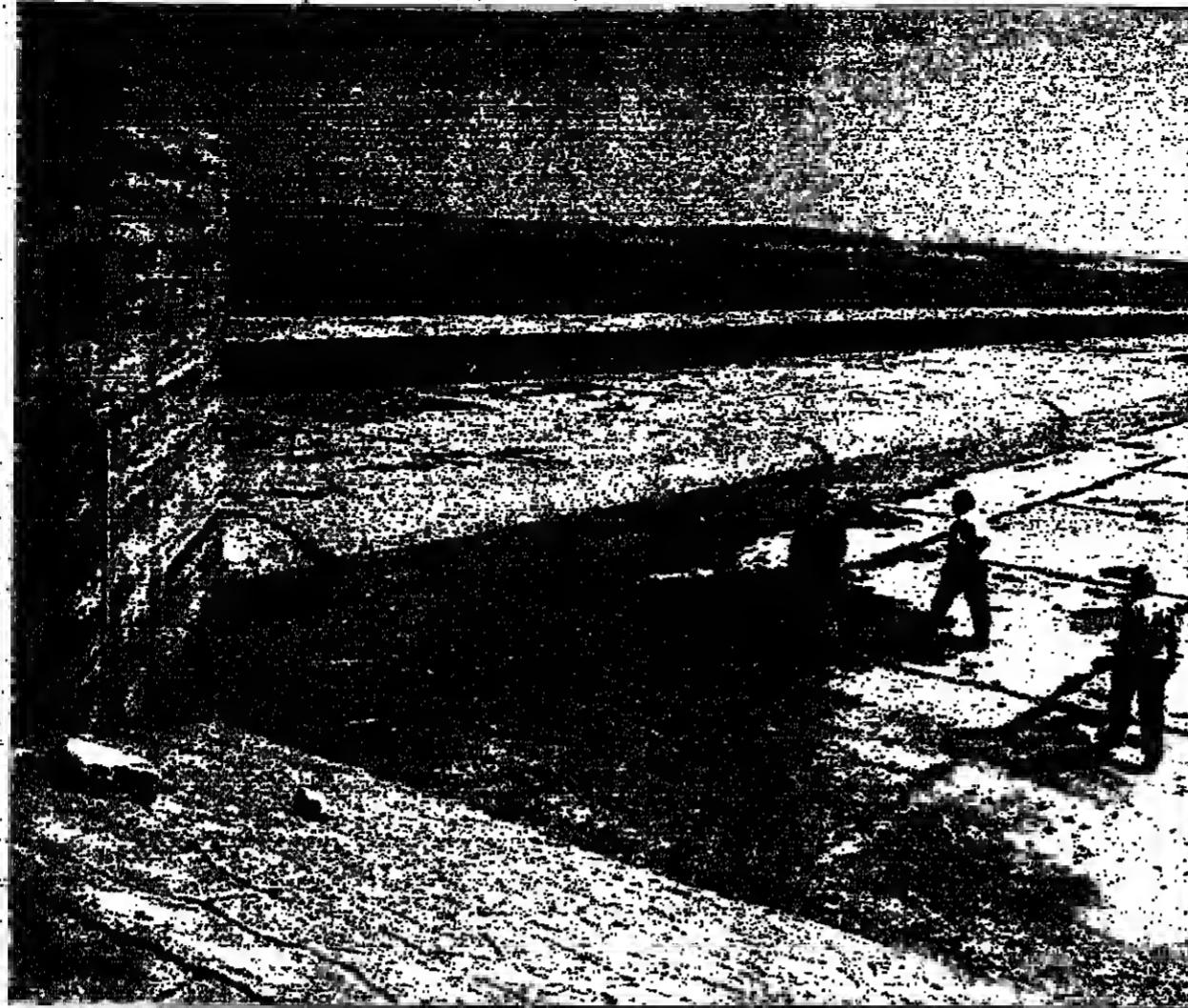
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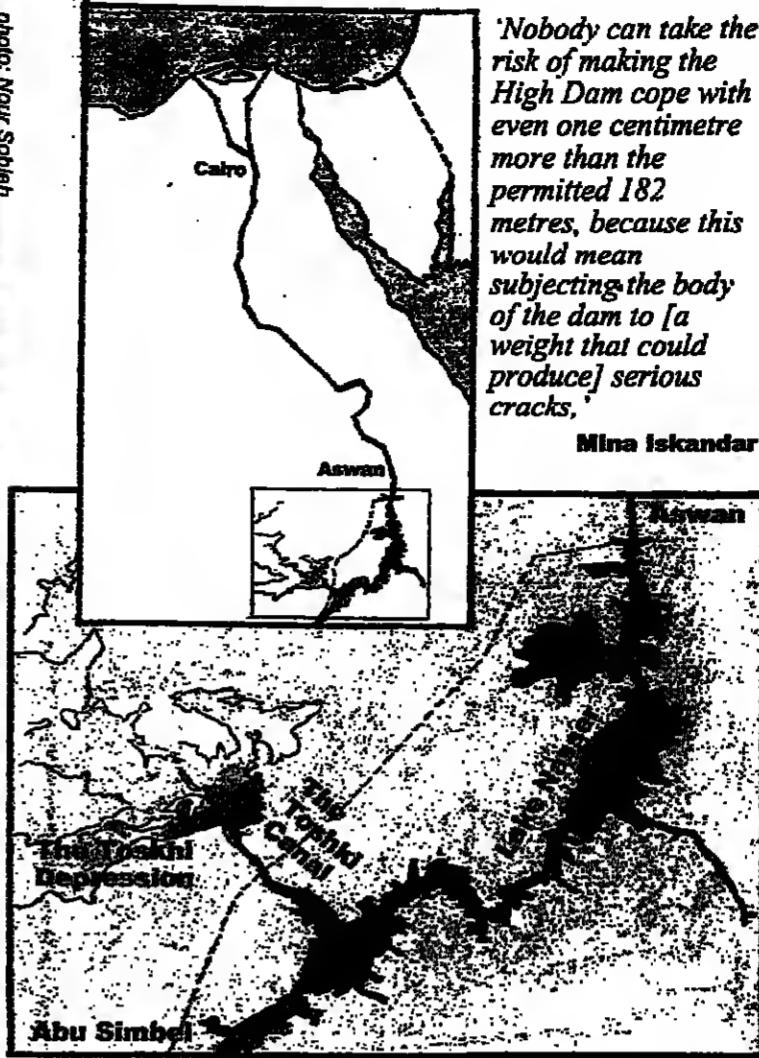
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The Nile's most abundant flood in a 100 years is to be celebrated on Thursday with President Mubarak attending as the Nile waters flow through the Toshki spill-way, 280km south of the Aswan High Dam. Dina Ezzat, reporting on government plans, remembers the building of the dam which this year saved the Nile valley from devastation



The Toshki spill-way photographed while still dry



'Nobody can take the risk of making the High Dam cope with even one centimetre more than the permitted 182 metres, because this would mean subjecting the body of the dam to [a weight that could produce] serious cracks.'

Mina Iskandar

Toshki: the safety valve

Since it was constructed over a decade ago, not a drop of water has run in the Toshki spillway. But its image as a dry canal may change over the next few days when the High Dam Authority channels this year's excess Nile floodwater into it. The event will be celebrated by festivities attended by President Hosni Mubarak and high-ranking state officials, announced Abd-el-Hadi Radi, minister of irrigation and water resources.

The 22km-long canal, which links Lake Nasser to the Toshki depression in the Western Desert, was built in the early 1980s — 10 years after the High Dam came into full operation — to drain off excess water flowing into the lake from the River Nile. It is designed to be used when the water stored behind the High Dam reaches a height of over 178 metres above sea level.

This week, for the first time since the spillway was built, the mark was passed. "These are safety

limits that we cannot go beyond," said Mina Iskandar, chairman of the High Dam Authority.

In theory, the High Dam can cope with the lake rising to 182 metres above sea level. But, according to Iskandar, "we cannot just leave the water to reach the maximum level. What would happen if we allowed the water to reach the maximum level and all of a sudden the country was hit by winter floods? What would I do then?" he asked. "We have to leave space for unexpected floods."

Preparations are well under way to inaugurate the spillway and start a number of agricultural projects which will put the excess 120 billion cubic metres of water in Lake Nasser to good use. But as excitement about the plans has built up, criticism has been levelled at the spillway's effectiveness.

One major concern is the high evaporation rates which will affect both the canal and the Toshki depression. Critics argue that this will minimise the

possibility of making good use of this water. Another concern is the feasibility of depending on a once-in-a-lifetime high flood to launch a series of agricultural projects.

Regardless of such debate, said Iskandar, each one-centimetre rise in the water level behind the High Dam means an extra 59 million cubic metres, or 59 million tons, of water. "Nobody can take the risk of making the High Dam cope with even one centimetre more than the permitted 182 metres, because this would mean subjecting the body of the dam to [a weight that could produce] serious cracks," he explained.

The High Dam is seen "as part of the national heritage. It is even a part of our national legacy," Iskandar said. "In the end it is a structure and has to be dealt with as such."

Before building the Toshki spillway, the High Dam Authority decreed that the maximum height of

water behind the dam should be 175 metres above sea level. "Any excess water used to be allowed to flow into the Nile to make sure that there was room for extra water in emergencies. It is Toshki that is allowing us to go up to 178 metres," Iskandar said.

According to the chairman of the High Dam Authority, now orchestrating the build-up to the spillway's inauguration, the evaporation theory does not hold water. "If I was to leave the floodwater in Lake Nasser, it would still evaporate. Maybe the rates would differ, but if the safety of the High Dam is at stake, chances cannot be taken," he said.

Political concerns have also been raised by critics who warn that projecting Egypt as a nation with a large water surplus will only make it more difficult for the country to win a favourable deal in any future negotiations with riparian states on the distribution of water resources.

"Egypt's rights to water resources are well es-

tablished and nobody can come and suggest that we should renegotiate those rights," Iskandar said. "People need to realise that a big excess of floodwater, which is unlikely to re-occur in the next 100 years, is not going to change Egypt's positions in any water negotiations."

According to the 1959 agreement on the distribution of water resources between the countries of the Nile basin, Egypt's annual share is 55.5 billion cubic metres, while Sudan's is 18.5 billion cubic metres. "We built the High Dam to protect our rights to water resources," Iskandar stressed. "Toshki is one of the complementary projects that assist in improving the performance of the dam."

The ministries of irrigation and agriculture are currently reviewing their studies to make the best possible use out of the water which will cover the 2,000 feddan surface area of the spillway.

'Symbol of your will'

It is 9 January 1960. Thousands of people, standing before the site of the Aswan High Dam, are holding their breath as their eyes follow the hands of Gamal Abdel-Nasser pressing a lever that would detonate 10 tons of dynamite to explode the granite mountains of Aswan and formally start the construction of the High Dam.

Today, as the High Dam blocks the way of the high flood waters from sweeping over the Nile Valley and stores it in a huge lake or channels it through the Toshki spillway, to the New Valley, memories of the national struggle to build this gigantic project flood the mind.

It was at the turn of this century that a group of engineers first came up with the idea of building a dam at Aswan to stop high floods from destroying entire villages and planted fields. Engineers also conceived that the dam would create massive water reservoirs for use in the case of low floods.

The dam project was shelved for decades until the 1952 Revolution, when the new government sought to build a society supported by expanded agriculture and industry. To increase the amount of arable land, the construction of the dam was then considered again.

"The building of the High Dam and the accompanying electricity generating station in Aswan testifies to the great success of the Egyptian people," read the certificate of the completion of the High Dam. "It is evidence of the people's determination to pursue the road to social and economic development and independence; a road laid down by Egypt's son, the unforgettable leader Gamal Abdel-Nasser."

After its completion in 1971, the Aswan High Dam increased the cropping pattern on 5.4 million of Egypt's arable land, brought 973,000 feddans under perennial irrigation and provided water that could potentially irrigate 1.3 million feddans of new land. It also dammed one of the world's largest reservoirs, Lake Nasser, spanning over 5,000 square kilometres.

But, in the minds of many Egyptians, the main achievement of the High Dam was bringing electricity to thousands of villages and towns that would have otherwise still been living in pitch darkness.

In short, says Mina Iskandar, head of the High Dam Organisation. "The High Dam meant a new life. People who did not live during the days before the construction of the dam could not imagine what it was like. Crops, cattle, and houses used to be completely buried under water in times of high floods. There were towns in Cairo that had no electricity," he recalled.

Every year, the High Dam saves around \$6 million that otherwise would have been wasted in damage, repair work and relief operations. But the road to building the dam was long and arduous.



President Nasser reviews plans (left); and Sadat, accompanied by Nasser's son Khaled, inaugurates the dam in 1971

In the mid-1950s, Egypt requested aid for the dam project from the United States, Britain, and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development — where the US and Britain had the final say — to raise the \$1.5 billion needed. The Western powers initially promised to help but later reneged on their pledge.

Responding to this insult, in 1956, President Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal to initiate fund-raising for the project that some historians would say was only second to his dream of uniting the Arab world. As a result of Nasser's decision, Egypt had to fight a war against the tripartite aggression of Israel, Britain and France.

"It was clear to us why we had to fight this battle," said Amina Shafiq, senior journalist who covered the news of the canal nationalisation and the tripartite aggression. "We knew we wanted to build the High Dam. It meant a lot to us and we had to fight for it," she added.

The former Soviet Union agreed to contribute funds and expertise for the dam project, which former Soviet Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev described as the "eighth wonder" of the world.

The High Dam consists of a rock-fill body and a grout curtain in its middle. It is 17 times bigger than the Great Pyramid. On the eastern side of the dam, there is a channel that controls the flow

of water.

After the dam's inauguration by Nasser in 1970, Egyptians celebrated the occasion. The streets of Aswan "could barely be seen as thousands of people took to the streets. They were waving flags and shouting slogans [supporting Nasser]," writes journalist Ragab Mahmoud in his recently published book: *The Soga of the High Dam: The story of men who conquered the mountain and the river*.

Printed by Al-Ahram Publishing House, the story, in 14 sections, tells the history and the story of the building of the dam. According to the author, the dam idea took shape in October 1956,

when agriculturist Mohamed El-Sayed Ayoub presented the government with his project.

A reader's memory is refreshed by episodes of the diversion of the Nile water in 1964, the UNESCO-led salvage campaign of Egypt's Pharaonic temples, the collective eviction of some 50,000 Nubians from their villages that were later flooded by the dam's backwaters.

Mahmoud also weighs the opposition to the dam in his book. He acknowledges that the dam prevents the flow of silt carried by the flood. Silt is needed to nourish the agriculture zone and to prevent the erosion of the Nile Delta by the waters of the Mediterranean.

"The dam stopped the build-up of the Delta," charged prominent environmentalist Abdel-Fattah El-Qassas. "It thus allowed the erosion of the shores to go unabated and it was only when the Ras El-Bar chalets and lighthouse tumbled down that the government started to take the matter seriously and adopt anti-sea protection measures," he added. These included the building of dykes at the banks of the river and the pioneering of modern agriculture methods to make up for the lack of natural fertilisers in agrarian land.

But Mahmoud's book concludes that the positive aspects of the dam far outweigh its negative consequences.

"Projects as big as the High Dam are always controversial. There are always different schools of engineering, but I can promise that the High Dam was one of Egypt's greatest achievements," Iskandar said.

For many anthropologists the real irreparable damage done by the construction of the High Dam is the dislocation of entire Nubian communities that had to be removed from their original habitat, on which the dam was built, to newly-built communities in nearby governorates.

"I hear so many stories about old Nubia from my mother. She makes it sound like a dream: she talks about beautiful housing, loving neighbours and a self-sufficient community," said Mohamed Bakr, a Nubian civil servant now living in Cairo.

What remains most irrefutable is the political significance of building the High Dam. It is widely agreed that when Nasser insisted on going ahead with the massive project, he had his eye on the country's national pride as much as its struggle for development. This point is driven home in one speech the former president gave as the course of the Nile water was forever diverted in 1964. Addressing thousands of people chanting his name, Nasser said: "Men, women and children of Egypt, here, before the entire world is a symbol of your will, perseverance, and dedication to work and sacrifice. This High Dam is a memorial of your victory..."

The restoration dilemma

The views and approaches of restorers and researchers in the preservation of cultural heritage are frequently in conflict, as Dr K C Innemee of the Netherlands Institute of Archaeology in Cairo explains

As both an art-historian and archaeologist, I was trained to approach objects of material culture from the point of view of the researcher. Research, in its most innocent form, means observation without intervention. Frequently, however, research is a synonym for analysis, dissection or destruction. Like an anatomist who performs an autopsy on a corpse in order to discover the cause of death, the archaeologist destroys in order to learn. This destruction applies not only to the objects or architectural features that are found during an excavation, but also to the stratigraphy. An intact sequence of archaeological strata can be excavated only once. To remove it without proper documentation is an act of useless destruction.

I would like to present a case-study in which a restorer works side by side with an art-historian/archaeologist to achieve the best results. At the Church of the Virgin (El-Adra) in El-Surian Monastery in Wadi Natrun, a fire in 1988 destroyed a mural of the Ascension of Christ in the western half-dome. A hole in the outer plaster revealed a fragment of a bearded face, confirming something that had long been suspected — there was another mural underneath.

In 1991, a dilemma arose when large parts of the outer mural were on the point of collapse. A decision had to be taken on whether to remove it completely and reveal the older painting beneath — an intriguing possibility — or simply to restore it.

That was only one side of the dilemma. Another was that the two other half-domes of the church also had evidence that counterparts of the Annunciation-painting were present under the 13th century painting. Where a piece of plaster had fallen off, we could clearly see a small fragment of an earlier painting. Since the later addition was in a damaged state, it was tempting to remove it.

What are the arguments for preserving a relatively new painting, or attempting to separate the layers? Reasoning from the view of the researcher, we should take off the outer painting. From the point of view of conservation we might rather decide to leave it in place. Then there is a third argument: the church is a functional building and from the point of view of aesthetics it might be preferable to maintain a certain consistency in the interior decoration rather than expose a patchwork of paintings from different periods.

In fact, we were confronted with three different approaches to the same problem: The researcher/archaeologist wanted to extract information from the stratigraphy and would continue where the restorer would stop; the restorer, who, in the most puritan case would only preserve the present situation without removing layers of plaster, but would try to preserve after the researcher finished; and last, but not least, the users of the building, in this case the monks, who would like to see their church restored to a former state of beauty, even if this means that layers have to be separated and missing pieces reconstructed.

In the case of El-Surian Monastery, the Coptic community would like to see reconstruction of the original Coptic paintings that existed before Syrian monks inhabited the monastery and redecorated the church. All three points of view have individual merit and logic.

In September 1995 the Supreme Council of Antiquities gave a small Dutch-Polish team permission to consolidate the fragments of the dome, and remove parts of the unpainted plaster in several places in order to detect the existence of paintings underneath. Removing a layer of unpainted plaster is, strictly speaking, an act of destruction that can only be justified if it helps to prevent worse destruction. In this case, the survival of the covered paintings is threatened because they are invisible, hidden beneath the plaster. Each nail in the wall will invisibly damage them. Just like excavations through layers of sand and earth, before removing a layer of plaster it should be properly documented, no matter how minimal its value may appear. Documenting, therefore, is what we are in the process of doing. The opening of a few 'windows' in the plaster have already gained us a wealth of information concerning the history of the church and its decoration. One fragment of a Syriac text, uncovered under several layers of plaster, mentioned events and words in the church completed in the year 922AD. The only question now is — how far should we go?



Family in residence in restored medieval house

How to get there

Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

Super Jet

Super Jet stations are located in Almaza (Heliopolis), Tahrir, Giza, Ramsis Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurgada and Sinai. Tel. 772-663.

Cairo-Alexandria

Services almost every half hour from 5.30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Almaza, Almaza and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter.

LE22 thereafter.

A VIP bus with phone access leaves Almaza at 7.30am. Tickets from Almaza LE23; from the airport LE23.

Cairo-Marsa Matruh

Services at 7am, departure and 7pm return from Almaza and Tahrir Square. Tickets LE16.

Cairo-Port Said

Services every half hour from 6am to 9am, 10am, 1pm, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Almaza, then Ramsis Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Cairo-Hurghada

Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Almaza. Departs 8am, noon and 3pm. Tickets LE10 and LE15 thereafter.

Alexandria-Port Said

Services every half hour from 6am to 9am, 10am, 1pm, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Almaza, then Ramsis Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

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Alexandria-Port Said

Services every half hour from 6am to 9am, 10am, 1pm, 3pm, and 4.30pm, from Almaza, then Ramsis Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh

Services 11am, from Tahrir, then Almaza and Sharm El-Sheikh 1pm. Tickets LE20 each way.

Kast Delta Bus Company

Buses travel to North Sinai, South Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Sharm El-Sheikh, then from Qudsiya Ramsis Square, Alexandria and Toguid Square (near Helwan). Buses to North and South Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abouqir. Tel. 482-4733.

Cairo-Suez

Services every half an hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qudsiya, then Almaza and Toguid Square. Tickets double bus LE15.75, air-conditioned bus LE15.35, one way.

Cairo-Sinai

Services every half an hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qudsiya, then Almaza and Toguid Square. Tickets double bus LE21; air-conditioned bus LE15.75, one way.

Cairo-El-Arish

Services every half an hour from 7.30am to 7pm, from Qudsiya, then Almaza and Toguid Square. Tickets double bus LE21; air-conditioned bus LE15.75, one way.

Cairo-Hurghada

Tickets LE25 for Egyptians, LE898 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh

Tickets LE257 for Egyptians, LE945 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Compiled by Rehab Saad

Life Prolonged

A momentous project by architect professors of Al Azhar University to document and restore old Islamic houses in Cairo has already begun. Sherine Nasr investigates

Beit Sukkar (Sukkar's house) is one of many 19th century houses in Old Cairo which are living models of Islamic architecture. This one, however, is much luckier than most. Its inhabitants, together with Al-Azhar University and the Goethe Institute, managed to restore it, thereby prolonging its life span for perhaps another hundred years.

Two years ago Salah Zaki, head of the Architectural Department at Al-Azhar University, launched a campaign to document and register old Islamic-style houses around the Citadel. "This area abounds in houses which are a hundred years old or more. They are not registered as monuments, but are examples of typical Islamic architecture and deserve care," Zaki said.

Beit Sukkar is named after the grandfather of the present inhabitants. It is a two-storey structure surrounding a large courtyard. The facade is decorated with an eight-metre-high *masrabiya* (wood lattice-work) extending along the balconies. "Both the *masrabiya* and the stained-glass are of exquisite workmanship," said Zaki.

It was Zaki, supported by a group of post-graduates at the Faculty of Engineering, who decided to include restoration along with documentation of the old buildings. "It was not enough to register old Islamic monuments without providing a solution for the miserable conditions these houses are in," Zaki said. "Since the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) does not have sufficient funds to restore every single house in Old Cairo, we felt it our duty to provide technical assistance free. These houses constitute a treasure of Islamic architectural styles which will ultimately disappear if not restored, meaning a serious loss for historical Cairo."

Before work could commence, funding and permission from the residents of the house had to be obtained. The Goethe Institute, inspired by the ambitious idea, granted a sum of LE5,000 and the owner of the house was fortunately willing to co-operate. Once a supervisor of the old manuscripts library in Dar El-Kutub, Adel-Qadir Sukkar had acquired a taste for antiquity.

"I have attained an awareness of the importance of the nation's heritage and the dire need to protect it," he

said. "I have always known the value of my house but there was nothing I alone could do to save it." In an attempt to facilitate the task of the volunteer architects, Sukkar managed to persuade the other inhabitants of the building to agree to the rather unconventional plan. "They were afraid at first that they might lose the house, but I managed to convince them that the project aimed to protect it for them," he said. They later became more enthusiastic and collected 3,000 pounds for the project.

Before restoration, the house was deteriorating due to an extremely old sewage system and subterranean water. "The leaking water made the walls damp," said Sukkar.

A new sewage system was installed and the walls were supported. "The appearance is completely different now," said Sukkar. The house, which is already 110 years old, should survive for another century. Zaki believes that the "participation of the users" was a healthy sign. "This will inspire the inhabitants to preserve and maintain what has been restored," he said.

The restoration of the *masrabiya* and the other woodwork will start soon. "The *masrabiya* is of wonderful craftsmanship," said Sukkar, who believes that once fully restored, it will add significantly to the beauty of the structure. "Even before restoration, tourists often stopped to gaze at my house. Some even asked to view the inside. Now they have all the more reason to do so," he said. The whole project was finished in a record four months. "The effort exerted and the money spent cannot compare to the great value of these houses," Zaki commented.

Two neighbouring houses, El-Hassan's and El-Ghondour's, are the Al-Azhar team's next project. "These have already been documented and we will begin restoration soon," Zaki said.

They both feature similar Islamic architectural features: beautiful *masrabiyyas* that cover the entire facade and small balconies with Islamic decoration. "With outside co-operation, we hope to be able to preserve several generations of the nation's Islamic history," he said.

A credo for travellers

Delegates attending World Tourism Day agreed that tourism cannot flourish without global peace and stability. Rehab Saad reports

International attendees of World Tourism Day, held in Cairo on 26 September, adopted the motto, "Tourism: a factor of tolerance and peace," to express their conviction that tourism cannot flourish without global peace and stability.

Tourism promotes cultural interaction and, therefore, better understanding between nations. This leads to tolerance and consequently to peace," said Mamdouh El-Beltagi, Egypt's minister of tourism.

Since the early 1980s, peace has been a major concern of the world tourism industry. At the Manila International Tourist Conference in 1980 the principle of "international tourism as an effective power to attain international peace" was born. This was reiterated in Canada in October 1988 at a conference entitled, "Tourism is a drive for peace." Delegates at this conference issued a charter, which expounds, "the credo of the peaceful traveller".

This ideology encourages people to travel the world in a spirit of peace: with an open mind and tolerant attitude, accepting and respecting cultural differences and respecting the environment.

Tourism also improves international relations," said Salah Abd el-Wahab, head of the Egyptian Society of Scientific Tourist Experts. "For example, the establishment of a foreign hotel in developing nations necessitates on-going cooperation between the government and foreign private-sector investors," he said, adding that tourist development also improves human relations, due to the continuous contact between the company's local hire and its employees all over the world.

International tourism is a thriving industry. The number of tourists around the world in 1995 reached 567 million, an increase of 3.8 per cent over 1994. International tourist revenue reached \$3,720 billion in 1995, and studies published in 1996 projected the revenue for the year 2000 at \$8,000 billion. Using masses of tourists to contribute to peace and understanding may be the international tourism community's best plan yet.

مكتبة الأصل



Chris Eubank, holder of the 1991 Super Middle Weight title



Eubank enjoying a camel ride during a visit to the Pyramids of Giza

Eubank is back

A LITTLE over a year after his retirement, British boxer Chris Eubank is set to knock the boxing world on its ear as he returns to the ring in a fight to be held in the indoor halls of the Cairo Stadium. Eubank was full of punch as he arrived in Cairo on 3 October to commence training at the Madin Olympic Centre for Al-Ahram Organisation sponsored event. The former Super Middle Weight Champion, famous for his dramatic entrances atop a motorcycle, is set to slug it out with Argentina's top-ranked and former South American champion Luis Dionisio Barrera in the 19 October match.

Al-Ahram, fresh from its success sponsoring international squash and handball tournaments, signed the boxer last July after gaining the approval of the World Boxing Organisation (WBO) and the Arab Boxing Federation.

Eubank, known in Britain as "Simply the Best", will raise the profile of middle weight boxing in Egypt as he stages his "Style on the Nile" come back before the cameras for the international television broadcast of the bout. The Briton first gained distinction after winning the 1990 Middle Weight Championship and a year later took the Super Middle Weight title. The boxer, from the seaside town of Brighton, is well known for his fund raising activities on behalf of children's charities and speaking engagements at local schools in the UK.

Eubank quit the ring following the controversial September 1995 split decision bout against Ireland's Steven Collins which cost him the title. At the time Eubank was quoted as saying, "the sport of boxing is dirty, the competition is unfair. If I knew that fact from the beginning, I would never have practised it at all".

At a recent press conference in Cairo the boxer explained his decision to put on the gloves once again saying, "Boxing is my area of excellence and what I do with ease. Watch, read, listen and learn, Eubank is back".



Disembarking at Cairo Airport



At the Cairo Stadium indoor halls where the event will take place

Out with the old

Last week, Cairo hosted the 10th Arab Volleyball Championship at Ahli Club's indoor halls. Abeer Anwar reports

The 10th Arab Volleyball Championships came to a conclusion last week in Cairo with Tunisia taking the title. Egypt, as erstwhile title holder and host, was joined by five other countries — Qatar, Lebanon, Algeria, Tunisia, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia — for the senior championships in which Qatar emerged as the new kid on the block.

The competitions were nearly a walk through for Tunisia in both the seniors and juniors events as they took all of their four matches to be crowned the champions. The Tunisians were followed by Qatar in second place, Algeria third and Egypt in fourth.

The Egyptian national team got off to a good start defeating Lebanon 3-0 in their first match. However, as valiantly as they tried to retain the title, the team was unable to bounce back from the trouncing they received from Qatar in their second match.

Qatar was the surprise star team of the event, beating not only Egypt but also long-time rivals Saudi Arabia for the first time in 20 years. The Qataris' best Algeria 3-2 to take second place. Although the Egyptian national team initially appeared relaxed and in control of the first set against Qatar, they lost the match 3-2. Qatar's technical manager, Gom G-U-Pyo of Korea summed up the team's success on the defensive strategy adopted by the players. "Egypt's players are very tall so we resorted to defense and the quick spikes of Mubarak Eid," he said.

Egypt struggled to defeat Saudi Arabia 3-1 in what was the team's last opportunity to escape the humiliation of a last place standing. The fallout from the disappointing results for the national team is still being felt as Egyptian Volleyball Federation head, Dr. Amr Elwany announced the sacking of the technical committee for the national teams. The next championship will see many new faces, as the federation also announced the disassembly of the national team. Team advisor, Pitta Carmelio is likewise out on the job market after he came under particular criticism for the lacklustre placing of the national squad.

The players are vexed that they are to be penalised for what they view as the result of circumstances beyond their control. They point out that they were unable to compete against strong teams in closed camps abroad prior to the championships. The team had been training at the Olympic Centre at Misr and only had access to a camp at Ras El-Bar. "Since April the team has not played any strong matches with other teams," commented former national team technical man-

ager Pitta Carmelio.

The best player and spiker titles went to Qatar's Eid who expressed his happiness at collecting two titles in one event. "I am very pleased that my training resulted in two titles and the silver medal for my country and I hope in the next competition we will be able to surpass all by beating Tunisia," commented Eid. Tunisia swept the titles easily with Riyad Omar taking best player, Ghazi Youssef, best blocker, Nour Alidin Hafez, best receiver and Mohammed Abdel-Qader, best defender.

In the juniors under-17 competition, 8 countries — El-Alamein, Qatar, Kuwait, Syria, Tunisia, the Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Egypt — divided into two groups participated in the event.

The two-week-old Egyptian team, in their first Arab contact, proved they were up to snuff. Under the supervision of coach Nour Zaki, the team was able to beat the Emirates to place third after losing to Tunisia in the semi-final. The results were Tunisia first, Bahrain second, and Egypt third.

"It is the team's first challenge and they were up to it especially since they were the only Egyptian team to stand on the medals podium and collect the bronze," said an elated Zaki.

In a repeat of the seniors ceremony, Tunisia again smashed the majority of the titles with Marwan Al-Qahri named best spiker and player and Riyad Al-Hadi best player. Egypt's Rainy Mahmoud was named best receiver; Qatar's Ottman Hassoun, best blocker; Bahrain Ahmed Ali, best defence and the Emirates' Ali Salem was named best server.

Parallel to the Arab Championship, the African qualifications for the 1997 World Cup to be held in Indonesia for the women's under-17 team were held at the indoor halls of the Cairo Stadium. Egypt's team was unable to rally for a win and did not qualify for the World Cup. "The team did its best but they did not train with any foreign teams and in first contact was in this championship," said national team coach Hisham Bedawi. Mauritius placed first, followed by Tunisia in second and Egypt in third. The Nigerian team, despite besting both Mauritius and Tunisia, missed their opening match against Egypt and had their results cancelled by the technical committee for late arrival.

Edited by Inas Mazhar

Cannonball express

A new race will take place in the Western Desert to replace the Rally of the Pharaohs. Eman Abdel-Moeti reports

head towards Fayoum to the north. The drivers will then skirt Wadi Rayan, which has been declared a natural preserve.

A relatively fewer number of participants are expected than for previous races and most will be amateurs. The drivers cite the lack of publicity and support for the low turnout.

Only four Egyptian drivers — Amr Shanan, Sherif Saleh, Khaled Taki, and Ra'ed Baddar — are taking part. "It is a pity that when all of Europe has known about this year's race, we the Egyptian participants did not know about it until recently," complained Khaled Taki, who holds the highest rank among Egyptian drivers (13th in the 1993 Pharaohs Rally).

Although some would argue that the sport of desert racing is harmful to the ecology of the desert, others point out that the races actually raise the awareness of the environment.

Amr Shanan, a veteran participant in the Pharaohs rally, is known for his green (for greenery) and blue (for the sea) Cherokee. Shanan, the first Egyptian driver to call for the conservation of the environment through the awareness brought by desert rallies, explained that this year's Cannonball will be a way to explore new areas in the desert that may need to be declared natural protectors. To back his claim he points out that Wadi Rayan was declared a natural preserve only after the Rally of the Pharaohs made the area popular.

According to Wael Abed, one of the race organisers, Mohamed Lake is expected to be declared a natural preserve by the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency.

"Desert rallies are not about challenging nature but rather respecting nature and trying to overcome its perils by studying and understanding it," said Shanan.

Sherif Saleh, who has driven in the rallies for over a decade and placed 23rd in 1991, said, "Give any car participating in the race five minutes after it has gone, and you won't find a trace of it on the sand or in the air."



Hassan's header

A LAST-minute header for the goal by Hossam Hassan saved the Egyptian national squad from sure defeat by the Moroccan team in an African nations qualifier match which took place at the Cairo Stadium on Sunday. The match, ending in a 1-1 draw, was the first for both teams in the first-leg of the African qualifications. Egypt, a member of group 3, along with Ethiopia, Senegal, and Morocco, drew while Senegal defeated Ethiopia 2-1 at Addis Ababa.

Football fans began converging on the stadium three hours before the beginning of the match and swelled into an over-capacity crowd numbering at least 100,000 at the 76,000 seat stadium.

At the outset it was difficult to predict a winner, as both teams exhibited a caution resembling that of a finals match rather than a qualifier. Fortunately for the spectators the match quickly metamorphosed into a thrilling encounter as the Moroccans sought to avenge the defeat handed out by the Egyptian clubs — Ahli, Zamalek, and Arab Contractors — to the Moroccans in the Arab and African championships last month.

The absence of a talented home-grown striker and scorer, with the exception of team super-star Hossam Hassan, obviously had a negative impact on the game on the Egyptian side.

As a result, the outcome for the Egyptian national team in the upcoming African and world cup qualifications is hard to foresee. The second leg is scheduled to take place next January.

Technical talk about dams is seldom riveting, but the man most conversant with Aswan's High Dam tackles the subject with gusto

Zaki Qenawi: Dam discourse

Still on his feet at 95, laughing heartily, taking everything in and possessing an exceptionally sharp memory, Ibrahim Zaki Qenawi is an inspiration. He has a photographic memory, he says, "I look at a telephone number and remember the numbers visually. I do not try to think hard about the number itself. I see it in my mind," he explained when I expressed surprise that a man of his age remembers dates, people and places so clearly. "My memory is far sharper than that of much younger men," he chuckled with unrestrained glee.

Qenawi is robust for his age. With the aide of a cane he insisted on walking me to the door of his flat in Mohandessin at the end of a brisk three-hour discussion at our first meeting. Other meetings no less vigorous were to follow. Apart from his slightly impaired sight and difficulties with hearing, he is fine for a man of his years. "I always got up at six and was at my desk by seven — even when I was a minister," Qenawi mused.

The most impressive characteristic of the nonagenarian is his irrepressible good humour. He speaks his mind and especially so these days as he is getting on in years. Perseverance, he insists, accounts for his longevity. "I always fought failure with all my strength. I pressed on until I accomplished my goals. I've always finished tasks on time," he boasted.

The Aswan High Dam was his most acclaimed accomplishment. A former minister of public works and water resources, Qenawi is proud that he was instrumental in the construction of the Aswan High Dam. He is the one living authority who knows about the dam more than anyone else. "The Aswan High Dam is no white elephant," Qenawi insists. "I hope the day will not come when Egypt would yearn for a single drop of water, and not find it except in the teardrops of her sons," he said. "We desperately need every drop of water," he added.

This week, Lake Nasser rose to its highest level since the construction of the dam in May 1964. "Without the Aswan High Dam the flood waters would have proved catastrophic," he said. He was born during the days when alternate years of disastrous flooding and ruinous droughts were commonplace. The Nile waters were a blessing for Egypt, but they were often also a bane. Irregular water supplies hampered agricultural development. The electrification of rural Egypt was an unthinkablefeat in early years of the century when Qenawi was growing up in the Delta. Today, the Aswan High Dam provides about half of Egypt's power supplies. It is for these reasons that Qenawi believes that the dam is the magnum opus of the 1952 Revolution.

Pack of Cards

"There were those who said that the dam was a mad idea. But, they were proven wrong," Qenawi said. "The construction of the dam was a strategic imperative. Nasser felt that it was a battle for survival," Qenawi said. Nasser regarded the construction of the Aswan High Dam as a challenging battle," Qenawi said.

Lo July 1977, Qenawi tendered his resignation from his job at the Ministry of Housing and Reconstruction. He headed the Central Reconstruction Department of the ministry and, doubled as the reconstruction adviser to the minister. Why did he resign? "I did not like how things were run. I disapproved of the so-called open-door policies advocated by Sadat. There were many people in a position of power and privilege who were dishonest and who profited from dubious schemes and unsound projects," Qenawi said. This was not his first resignation, in 1970 he resigned his ministerial post.

He stays away from political discussions — especially those that revolve around sensitive domestic issues. But, he is strongly opinionated when it comes to foreign policy — especially concerning the protection of Egypt's interests and rights to the Nile waters. He contends that dealing with Sudan over sharing water resources was often difficult in the past.

He concedes that there have been misunderstandings about sharing the Nile waters between Egypt and its African neighbours. "It is natural for upstream countries to have disagreements and a cautionary mistrust of downstream countries like Egypt," Qenawi said referring to disputes between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia over the exploitation of the Nile's waters. "The Nile should be a uniting not a dividing factor," he said.

Sudan vehemently opposed the construction of the Aswan High Dam. Egypt paid 15 million Egyptian pounds in compensation for the submerging of Sudan's northernmost city, Wadi Halfa, under Lake Nasser. However strong historical ties bind us to Sudan forever," Qenawi said.

Then he touches on another raw nerve — the regional rivalry for control over the Nile waters. "Egypt spent over 20 million Egyptian pounds on the construction of the Jonglei Canal in southern Sudan; but Sudan procrastinated over the completion of the vital project that will save some five billion cubic metres of fresh water that could be shared equally between Egypt and Sudan. The civil war in southern Sudan brought the project to an abrupt halt," he added.

Qenawi feels strongly about the ecological problems facing Egypt and the Middle East. He urges the adoption of sound ecological policies. Barings a few Western Desert oases, the River Nile is Egypt's only source of fresh water. "The notion that Egypt sits atop a huge reservoir of under-

ground water is simply not true. I said it before and I'll say it again: Egypt is not sitting atop a limitless underground water reservoir," Qenawi said. He is very passionate about his advocacy of water conservation.

The building of the Aswan High Dam was full of paradox. Not everyone was happy. But Qenawi is very defensive when it comes to his pet subject — the dam. He has no time for many of his critics. "It is said that the Nubians lost out," I ventured. "On the contrary, they were relocated, and housed in spacious and comfortable buildings with many modern amenities such as electricity and running water. We made sure that the Nubians' new homes in Kom Ombo and elsewhere were modeled after their ancient social and architectural traditions — down to the *zir* (traditional water container) and its lid," he countered. The desert tightly embracing the Nubian Nile Valley is one of the world's harshest places. The narrow strip of land on the left and right banks of the Nile was submerged in Lake Nasser. "The old Nubia was never a very productive land," Qenawi claims.

"On 8 October 1952, the newly installed Revolutionary Command Council commissioned a feasibility study group to look into the possibility of building a gigantic dam on the Nile. The Aswan High Dam International Committee was set up. I was a member of the International Committee. By 4 December 1954, the International Committee gave the green light for the project to go ahead. Nasser proceeded immediately with the construction plans. I was asked to help," Qenawi said.

Egypt approached the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) to fund the Aswan High Dam project early in 1955. After a thorough evaluation of the costs and benefits of the project, the IBRD approved financing it. But, on 19 July 1956, the IBRD suddenly reneged on its earlier promises. Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal Company on 26 July 1956. Britain, France and Israel retaliated by waging the tripartite aggression against Egypt on 26 October 1956. The rest, as they say, is history.

Egypt signed an agreement with the former Soviet Union on 27 December 1958. The High Dam Authority was responsible for the execution of the Aswan High Dam. Othman Ahmed Othman's Arab Contractors Company and Misr Concrete Corporation were among the most important Egyptian firms that carried out excavations, the de-

velopment of rock quarries, concrete production and the building of the dam's body. "Rock excavation began with the inauguration of the project on 9 January 1960 when Nasser blasted the first charge of explosives for the excavation of the diversion canal," he said.

Qenawi was over the moon. His joy knew no bounds. He was a workaholic in those days. For much of this time his wife and three children were in Cairo while he worked some 18 hours a day overseeing the construction of the dam. "A dam is begun by digging a trench in a bedrock foundation. Next an initial waterproof layer of compressed clay is laid down. Nasser used to enjoy exploring the trenches and dam site tunnels. I used to give him a guided tour of the nether world underneath the Nile," Qenawi mused.

Work on the actual dam structure began on 9 January 1963 when Nasser threw the first granite stone into the Nile. Qenawi remembers that day well. "We worked very hard in those days. There were no holidays, no Ramadan, no feasts, and no Fridays," he chuckled. Eventually, some six million tons of sand were sluiced in the Nile. Nasser arranged for overseas visitors to tour the site. Qenawi was often in charge of showing such visitors around. He knew the area like the back of his hand — tunnels, stone crushing plants, concrete mixing plants, cement silos, upstream canal, downstream canal, cofferdams, the whole lot. "We had very few technicians then. We invited 1,500 technicians from the former Soviet Union. Over 2,000 Egyptian technicians were trained on the job in Aswan. Soon only 200 Russian technical experts were left in the country.

Born in Shebeen El-Kom, Menufiya, in the heart of the Nile Delta, his father died when he was at the tender age of six. He went to school pretty late. "Those were the days of the Kuttab — Qur'anic schools," he explained. "Everybody went to school here in those days, and especially in rural areas," he added. As it turned out, he loved school and was a very bright pupil, excelling in mathematics and physics.

Constructions are the love of his life.

"Even as a child in rural Menufiya I had an eye for irrigation canals. I was fascinated by the mechanics of irrigation," Qenawi said.

As a child he loved mathematics and algebra which put him in good stead when he became interested in engineering at university.

In 1924 Qenawi graduated from Fouad I, now Cairo University, with a bachelors degree in engineering. In 1931 he received a masters degree in civil engineering with distinction from Cambridge University, England. He left Egypt in 1948 to study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Qenawi is a self-made man.

"I paid my way through college in America," he remembered with a proud smile. "It was easier in those days," he said. Four years after his departure he earned a Ph.D.

Qenawi is well-travelled. "I have been to over 40 different countries," he mused. In Syria he helped construct dams on the River Euphrates and lived several years there during the days that Egypt and Syria were one country — the United Arab Republic. He also has very fond memories of the Far East and especially China. The walls of his otherwise austere living room are decorated with the most exquisite Chinese silk paintings. One of the memories he holds dear is when he saw thousands of peasant labourers digging irrigation canals and constructing a dam with their bare hands in rural China in the mid-1970s. "It was unforgettable."

Profile by Gamal Nkrumah



Pack of Cards

by Madame Sosostris

Not only does he inform, educate and fascinate, but it is my conviction that Mohammed Hassanein Heikal has earned the title of "keeper of our Arab national memory". This is perhaps the most salient feature of his latest work, issued earlier this year in English by Harper Collins under the title, *Secret Channels: The Inside Story of Arab-Israeli Peace Negotiations*. Sure, the book is brimful of un-, or previously little-known facts. This, we have come to expect from a work by Heikal who has managed to keep himself informed of a great deal of what goes on behind-the-scenes in regional and international politics, despite having spent more than 20 years away from the corridors of power. Heikal, however, marshals the facts, well, little or previously unknown, not only to provide us with a deep understanding of where we have been, and where we are heading, but also to remind us of that which we are continuously being made to forget, of what perhaps some of us would like all of us to forget.

The Arabic edition of *Secret Channels* was issued in three parts, all under the general heading: "Secret Negotiations between the Arabs and Israel". The last part of the trilogy, which deals with Palestinian-Israeli negotiations under the title: "The peace of illusions: Oslo, before and after", hit bookshops and newsstands this week. The timing could not have been more opportune, coming one week after Netanyahu's extremism put the Oslo Agreements' shortcomings in bold relief.

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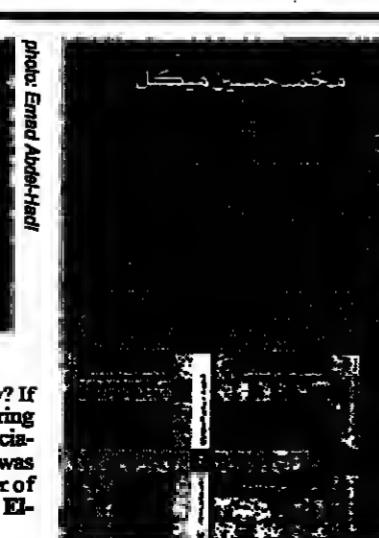
Luxor
20 October, 1996
Luxor Temple,
7:00 pm
Free admission

Arab slams
racist papers

Arabs issue
the gate
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Nafie, Tatawi and guests at the opening

Did you happen to pass by Al-Ahram building last Monday? If you didn't, then you missed seeing me attending a most inspiring exhibition, that of the artistic work of members of the Association of War Veterans which took place in Al-Ahram lobby. It was officially opened by Chairman of the Board and Chief Editor of Al-Ahram Ibrahim Nafie and Minister of Economy Nawal El-Tatawi. The exhibition will remain open until the 17th.



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